BBC **THE WEIRD WORLD OF WALTON**
How his outrageous *Façade* shocked high society in the 1920s

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BBC RADIO 3
Full June listings inside
See p100

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE AWARDS 2024

John Wilson

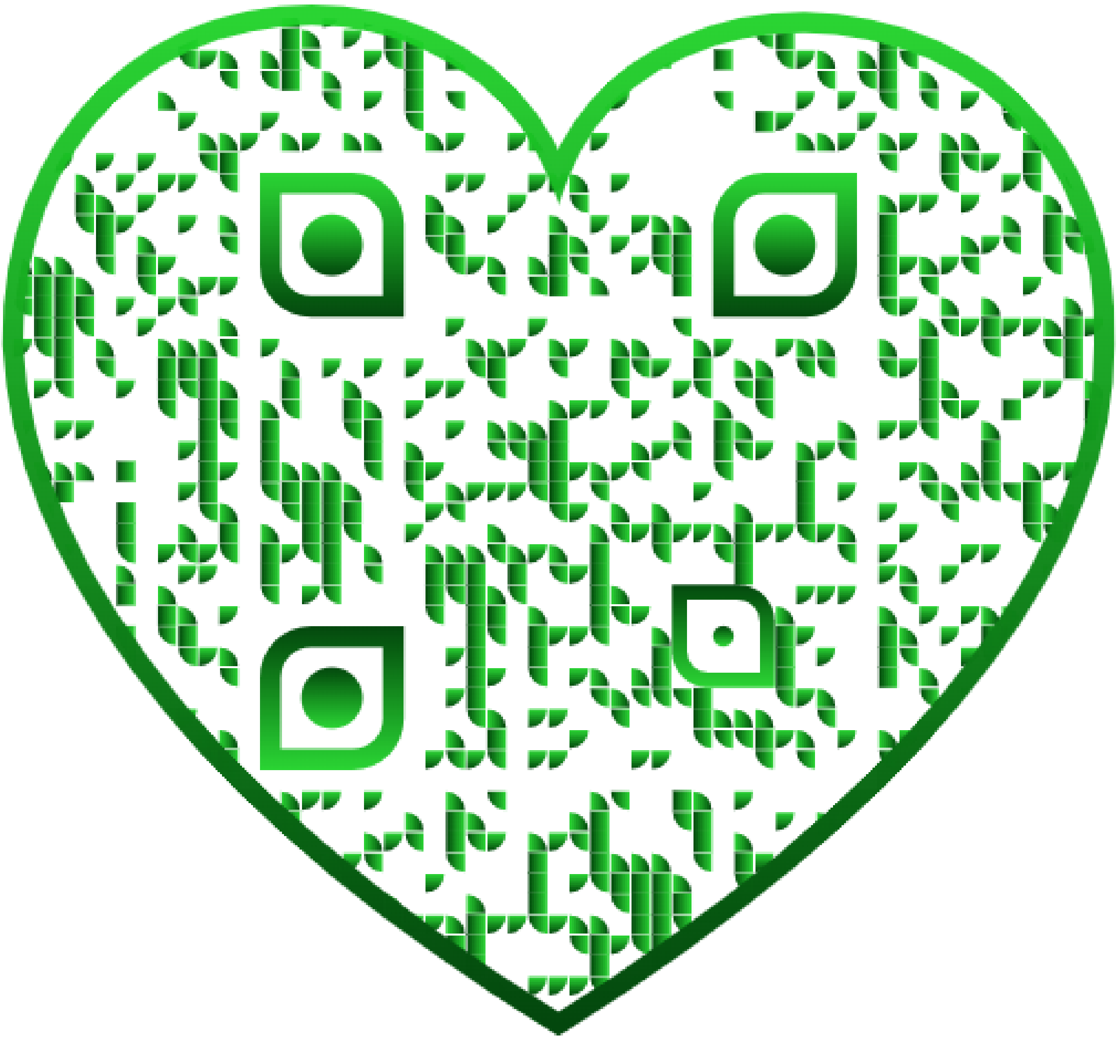
The dynamic conductor triumphs with his stunning collection of English classics

See p26 for details of all the winners!

Haydn seek
The strange tale of his missing head

100 reviews by the world's finest critics
Recordings & books – see p68

Also in this issue…
- Magical sonic adventures with composer Anna Clyne
- We retrace the journey that inspired Holst's *Planets*
- The sultry Spanish sounds of Isaac Albéniz



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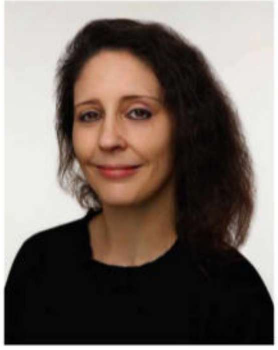
Welcome



Welcome to this very special issue, celebrating the BBC Music Magazine Awards 2024. This past year showcased a fine crop of releases from an array of wonderfully creative artists, who increasingly pushed boundaries to meet a shifting and expanding idea of what classical music should be.

From over 900 reviews, we emerged at the end of the year with a shortlist of 340 recordings. From there, our Awards Jury had the tricky task of whittling down this superb list to just 27 shortlisted albums in nine categories. And what a shortlist it was... encompassing composers from Monteverdi and Lully to Dobrinka Tabakova, Errollyn Wallen and Thomas Adès, and featuring such rising stars as Sean Shibe, Jakub Józef Orliński and George Xiaoyuan Fu, alongside established names like Krystian Zimerman, Isabelle Faust and Jonas Kaufmann. Not to mention a surprise entry in the Opera category for Rodgers & Hammerstein's classic musical *Oklahoma!* from John Wilson and his incomparable Sinfonia of London.

The winning albums in each category were determined by public vote, and on page 26 we reveal the albums that you, our discerning readers, have selected – plus our Personality of the Year and Recording of the Year, as chosen by our panel of experts. For a feast of musical delights, read on...

Charlotte Smith *Editor*

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

Rick Jones
Writer and Blue Badge Guide

'Although it was December when Holst (aged 39) explored Essex in 1913, I (aged 67) recreated his tour in June to coincide with the Thaxted Festival, so readers will have to imagine the leafless trees, low sun and unwrinkled complexion.' ***Page 48***

Jessica Duchen
Author and journalist

'I've always loved Albéniz's piano music, but was puzzled by his operas. Now, thanks to his librettist's descendant, I've been able to explore their secret history and what they tell us about this extraordinary composer...' ***Page 58***

Terry Blain
Music journalist

'The grand, criss-crossing clamour of American life – its songs, hymns, disputations and civic celebrations – energises Ives's music. *Three Places in New England* is Ives at his most evocative, and still sounds exhilaratingly innovative.' ***Page 64***

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Composer Dani Howard

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COVER: JOHN MILLAR **THIS PAGE:** BEN EALOVEGA, ALI WRIGHT, SIM CANETTY-CLARKE

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Plus our favourite work depicting a particular place (see p64)
Editor Charlotte Smith
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John Williams's A Hymn to New England
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Steve Wright
Vaughan Williams's Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1
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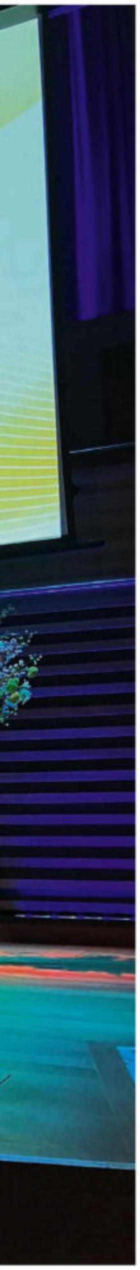

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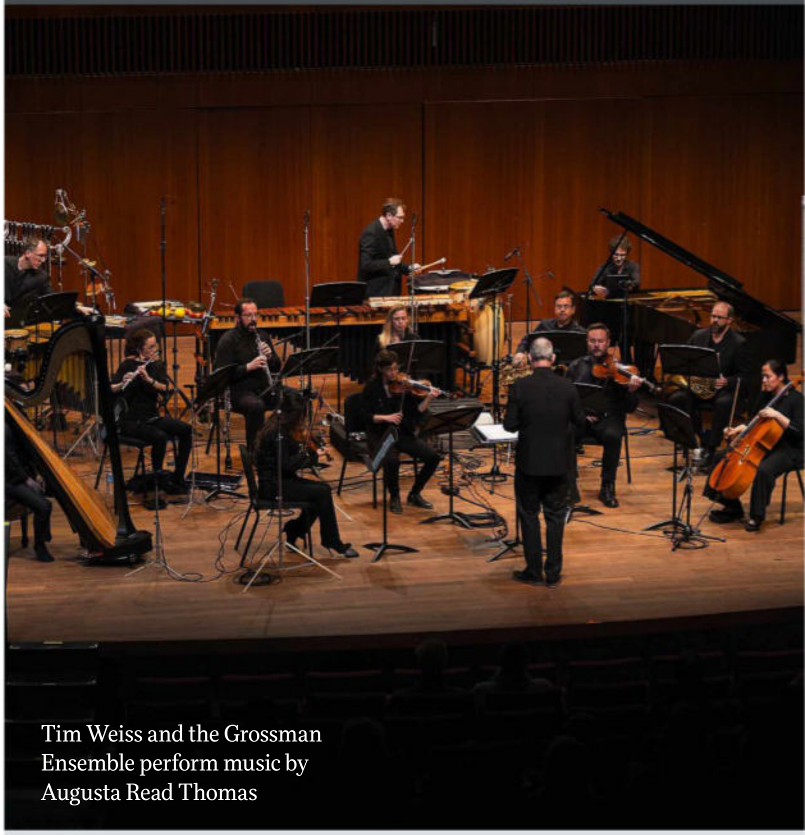
June reviews

Your guide to the best new recordings and books



Tim Weiss and the Grossman Ensemble perform music by Augusta Read Thomas

68 Recording of the Month

Augusta Read Thomas
Terpsichore's Box of Dreams

'The whole album has the feeling of a musical treasure trove, resplendent in its sense of vitality and beauty'

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LETTER *of the* MONTH

Brilliant baton: American conductor Karina Canellakis

MATHIAS BOTHOR

Canellakis leads the way

I read with great interest your piece on the best contemporary female conductors (at classical-music.com). However, I was dumbfounded that you omitted Karina Canellakis. Surely Canellakis's achievements have equalled if not surpassed those of many of the conductors you've selected ahead of her. Among those achievements are winning the Georg Solti Award for Orchestra in 2016, being the first woman to conduct the opening night of the BBC Proms in 2019, and being appointed the principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 2021. I've seen her conduct live at Tanglewood in addition to some of her online recordings, and I can attest to her remarkable rapport with the orchestra and her ability to elicit brilliant performances.
Jerry Meyer, *Amherst, MA, US*

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Dead good

I enjoyed Jeremy Pound's recent article on Requiems and your (very fun) rating system (May issue). However, to not include Ligeti's Requiem is a certain misstep, as it is, arguably, the most famous requiem written in the last 60 years (admittedly due to a certain movie). I was very much looking forward to seeing how you rated this piece.
Mike Caparula, *Manteno, IL, US*

The editor replies:
Ligeti's wonderful Requiem is a truly unsettling beast. On our Blood and Thunder scale, we'd give it the full five-flame 'Be very afraid' rating.

Complete collection

Having just opened the latest milestone issue (No. 400; May), I'd like to use this momentous occasion as an excuse to share my own journey with you since 1992. I subscribed for the first few years and have taken out further subscriptions on and off over the years. I also bought other issues as and when I saw them on the newsagents' shelves, always enjoying the included CDs long after having finished the magazines. Once I retired a few years ago, I started hunting down those CDs I had missing from my collection. By regular visits to charity shops – some of which even took my contact details and alerted me when they had new stock in – together with judicious purchases from the likes of eBay, I finally managed to complete the collection just last month! I've even dedicated a single CD storage unit to *BBC Music* CDs and am happily working my way through listening to both old and new performances in my increased leisure time. Many congratulations, and here's to the next 400 issues!
Peter Draper, *Malvern, Worcestershire*

Oboe opportunities

As a fellow oboist, I am writing in response to Ian Kemp's letter on the 'Dartington Effect' (April). Over the years I have belonged to various orchestras, chamber music groups and formed my own wind quintets, often with piano. One of the organisations that I find most inspiring is Contemporary Music for All (coma.org) who have many groups all over the British Isles and beyond. It is open to any instrumentalist or singer. There are also many creative composers in these groups who write music appropriate to the instrumentation available. You can find details of orchestras, wind groups and bands at amateurorchestras.org.uk. The British Double Reed Society (bdrs.org.uk), meanwhile, provides a brilliant way of contacting other double reed players, and I have found it very productive to go to local concerts and talk to the players

in order to find out about any vacancies or forthcoming opportunities. It is amazing playing the solo repertoire with a pianist. The more people you know, the more likely you are to find opportunities. And above all, keep practising and be prepared to travel.
Jane Carrington-Porter, *via email*

Deller tribute

I much enjoyed Rebecca Franks's profile of Jakub Józef Orliński (March), and I was particularly interested in the side article on the rise of the countertenor, in particular the mention made of the late Alfred Deller. Arrangements are being made by the Margate Civic Society for a plaque in Deller's memory to be erected in St John's Church, the parish church of Margate in Kent where he was born – it will commemorate the fact that he was a chorister at the church for many years, thus commencing his long and splendid career in music, promoting the countertenor voice both in the UK and internationally and founding the Stour Music Festival. There will be a simple ceremony later this year to unveil the plaque.
Colin Whyman, *Roquetas de Mar, Spain*

How low can you go?

In Steve Wright's *15 musical works to study to* feature (March), he states in his Number 9 recommendation – Vaughan Williams's Tuba Concerto – that the tuba and double bass play their lowest notes at about 40 Hz. Note that the contrabassoon plays lower. The lowest note for contrabassoons vary; most go down to B flat, at about 29 Hz, many only go down to C, at about 32 Hz, and a few go down to A, at 27 Hz. Also note the current development of the subcontrabassoon by Richard Bobo in Arkansas, US – still in prototype, it's built to play an octave lower than the contrabassoon.
Doug Moran, *Denver, CO, US*

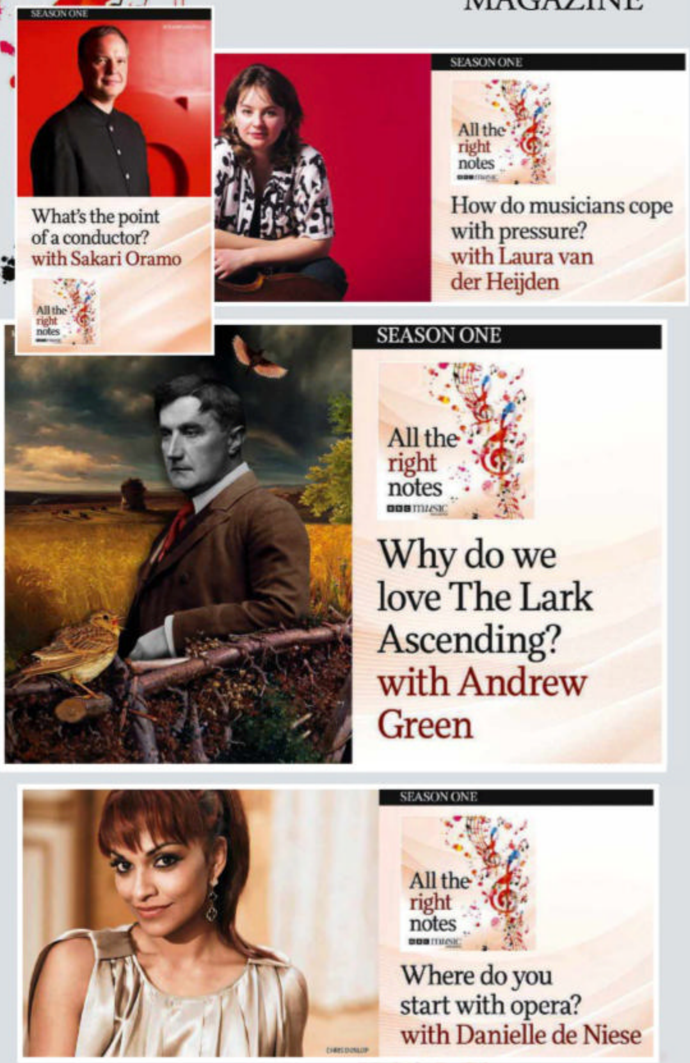
Exam notes

I was surprised that Steve Wright didn't mention studying to Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23, about which there was an experiment a couple decades ago showing that listening prior to an exam actually improved performance. I gave my son a recording of the concerto after reading a report of that research and before his finals. His Oxford degree is all the confirmation of the experiment I need!
Laz L Schneider, *Fort Lauderdale, FL, US*

Timing is everything

The cover discs included with every issue of *BBC Music Magazine* are very welcome and have introduced me to many composers and works that were new to me and new takes on familiar repertoire. There is, however, one minor niggle with the timings on the disc liners. Timings are given for single movement works and for the disc as a whole but, for multi-movement works, timings are given for individual movements but not for the work as a whole. Perhaps it's just me, but I usually listen to whole works rather than individual movements and it's a faff cracking open the jewel case, adding up the movement timings and writing the total on the liner before reinserting it. Could you also include the totals, as is usual with most record labels?
Bob Humphrey, *Bristol*

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE



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BBC music MAGAZINE

The *full* score

Our pick of the month's news, views and interviews

Mäkelä named as new Chicago Symphony conductor

Flying Finn adds prestigious 'Big Five' music director position to European posts

Heading to America: Klaus Mäkelä has enjoyed a spectacular career trajectory

MARCO BORGGREVE/ROYAL CONCERTGEBOUW ORCHESTRA, GETTY

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra has announced that Klaus Mäkelä is to be its next music director. The 28-year-old Finnish conductor will begin as the orchestra's music director designate with immediate effect, before beginning a five-year contract in the post itself in September 2027. His new position will see him commit to at least 14 weeks per year with the 133-year-old ensemble, one of the US's famed 'Big Five' orchestras, in the same year that he also takes up the position of chief conductor of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam.

It has been an extraordinarily rapid rise for Mäkelä, a former student of the famous conducting teacher Jorma Panula at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. In December 2017, he was announced, at just 21, as principal guest conductor of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and within less than 12 months was named as the next chief conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic, beginning in 2020. With the Oslo Philharmonic, Mäkelä has impressed both on stage and in the studio, not least with the Decca recording of Sibelius's complete symphonies that was nominated for the Orchestral Award at the 2023 BBC Music Magazine Awards.

> 'The Chicago Symphony combines such brilliance, power and passion'

Chicago forebears

Mäkelä's CSO predecessors

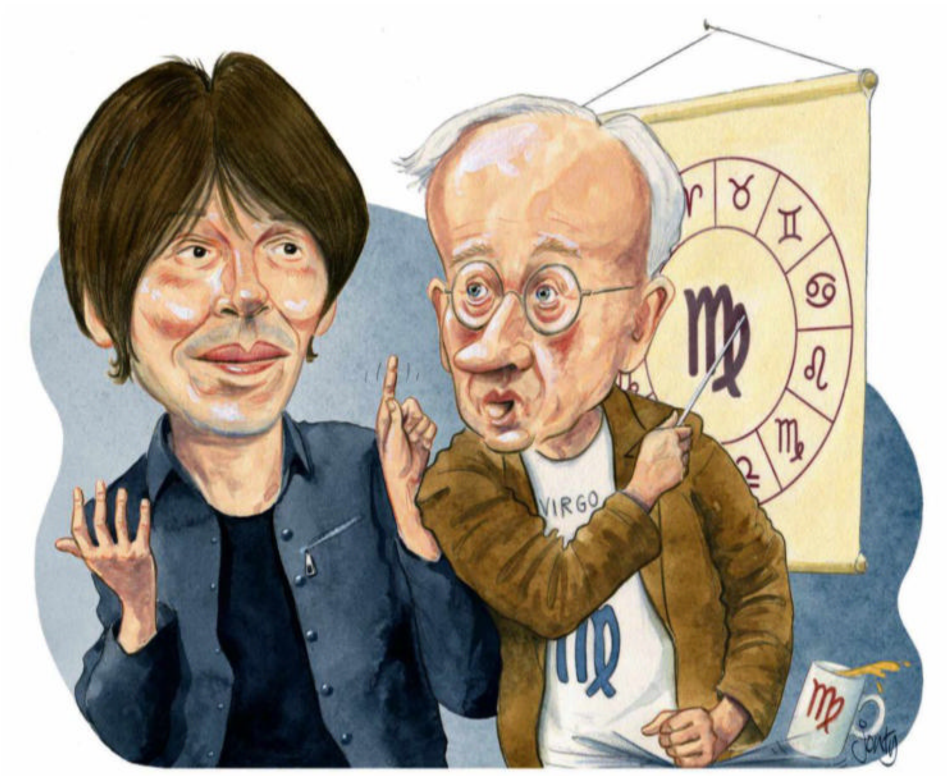
Theodore Thomas *(1891-1905)*
Frederick Stock *(1905-42)*
Désiré Defauw *(1943-47)*
Artur Rodziński *(1947-48)*
Rafael Kubelík *(1950-53)*
Fritz Reiner *(1953-62; above)*
Jean Martinon *(1963-68)*
Georg Solti *(1969-91)*
Daniel Barenboim *(1991-2006)*
Riccardo Muti *(2010-23)*

In 2021, he also began as music director of the Orchestre de Paris, with whom he has recorded two albums of Stravinsky ballets, again for Decca.

As with his other appointments, Mäkelä is not taking a step into the complete unknown, as he has guest conducted the CSO twice. 'I look forward to getting to know the musicians more over the coming years,' he says, describing his future colleagues as 'an orchestra that combines such brilliance, power and passion.'

His predecessors in the 'Windy City' are nothing if not prestigious. Founded in 1891, the CSO can name legends such as Rafael Kubelík, Fritz Reiner and Daniel Barenboim among the conductors to have held the post before Mäkelä. Perhaps most renowned, however, was Georg Solti, under whose tenure from 1969-91 the CSO enjoyed a golden era, crowned with Grammy Awards galore. Riccardo Muti, Mäkelä's immediate predecessor, is now the CSO's music director emeritus for life.

See Richard Morrison, p25



Heavenly Holst or cosmic Cox? The choice is yours...

Holst's 150th anniversary later this year will doubtless bring countless performances of the world's most famous astrology-inspired work (see p48). But for those who may find moon phases, Librans and all that a touch mumbo-jumbo for their liking, Professor Brian Cox, conductor Daniel Harding and the Britten Sinfonia will be presenting an astronomic alternative. At the Royal Opera House from late July, 'Symphonic Horizons' will combine science and music as the audience is taken 'on a journey of cosmic ideas to explore the secrets of the universe'. And not a Mercury retrograde in sight.

THE MONTH IN NUMBERS

35

...train stations in the north of England report that piping classical music has helped to reduce antisocial behaviour.

64

...per cent of adults say streaming has altered how they listen to music, according to a survey from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

3

...Choirs Festival is on the hunt for a boss, as CEO Alexis Paterson moves on to pastures new at Oxford University's Cultural Programme.

1,000,000

...pounds awarded by the Vinehill Trust to Gabrieli Roar, conductor Paul McCreesh's (above) inspiring programme for young singers.

GETTY, BEN WRIGHT **ILLUSTRATION:** JONTY CLARK

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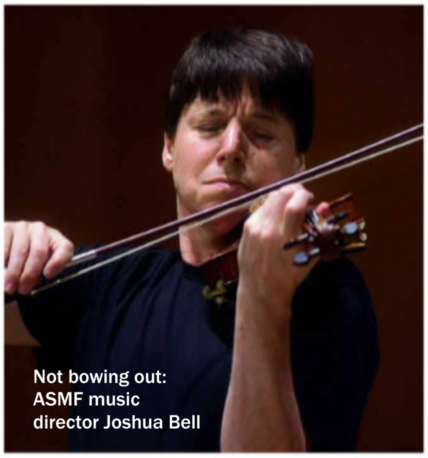

Not bowing out: ASMF music director Joshua Bell

Additional Bell

As it celebrates what would have been the 100th birthday of its founder Neville Marriner, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields has announced that current music director Joshua Bell has extended his contract until 2028. The new deal will mean that Bell, who took over in 2011, will be in post for an impressive 17 years. He will, though, have to carry on until 2063 to match Marriner's tally. By then he'll be 96.

Going it alone

Wigmore Hall has revealed plans to become entirely privately funded and self-sufficient, meaning that it will need no help from the public purse. To meet this aim, it has set up a Director's Fund, for which a target of £10m by 2027 has been set. Though only three per cent of its funding currently comes from Arts Council England, the London venue has acknowledged that even that amount cannot be taken for granted in future years.

Opera cut short

As if to prove Wigmore Hall's point, Welsh National Opera is to cut its 2024/25 season down by two weeks following a substantial reduction in its funding from both Arts Council England and Arts Council Wales. The shortened season will mean that the company will not be performing at the Bristol Hippodrome in February or at Venue Cymru, Llandudno, the following May.

The joy of Six

Should you be feeling in the mood, as it were, do make sure you have the right music to hand – a new survey has revealed that songs at 119 beats per minute are the most popular to make love to. The survey goes on to recommend the likes of Taylor Swift and Lady Gaga, but we can add that, in classical music terms, *Allegro moderato* is roughly the tempo we're looking for. So, the finale of Schubert's Sixth Symphony should do the trick nicely. You're welcome.

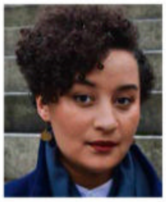
Rising Stars

Three to look out for...

Tim Posner *Cellist*

Born: London, UK
Career highlight: Recording my debut concerto CD with the Bern Symphony and conductor Katharina Müllner was a really special experience. A highlight was recording Bloch's *Schelomo*, a work I've always adored.
Musical heros: Cellists Steven Isserlis and Leonid Gorokhov – incredible musicians and constant sources of inspiration.
Dream concert: I've performed at Wigmore Hall a number of times, but never a recital with piano, which I'd love to do. And performing as a soloist in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, probably my favourite hall, would definitely be a dream.

Lea Shaw *Mezzo-soprano*

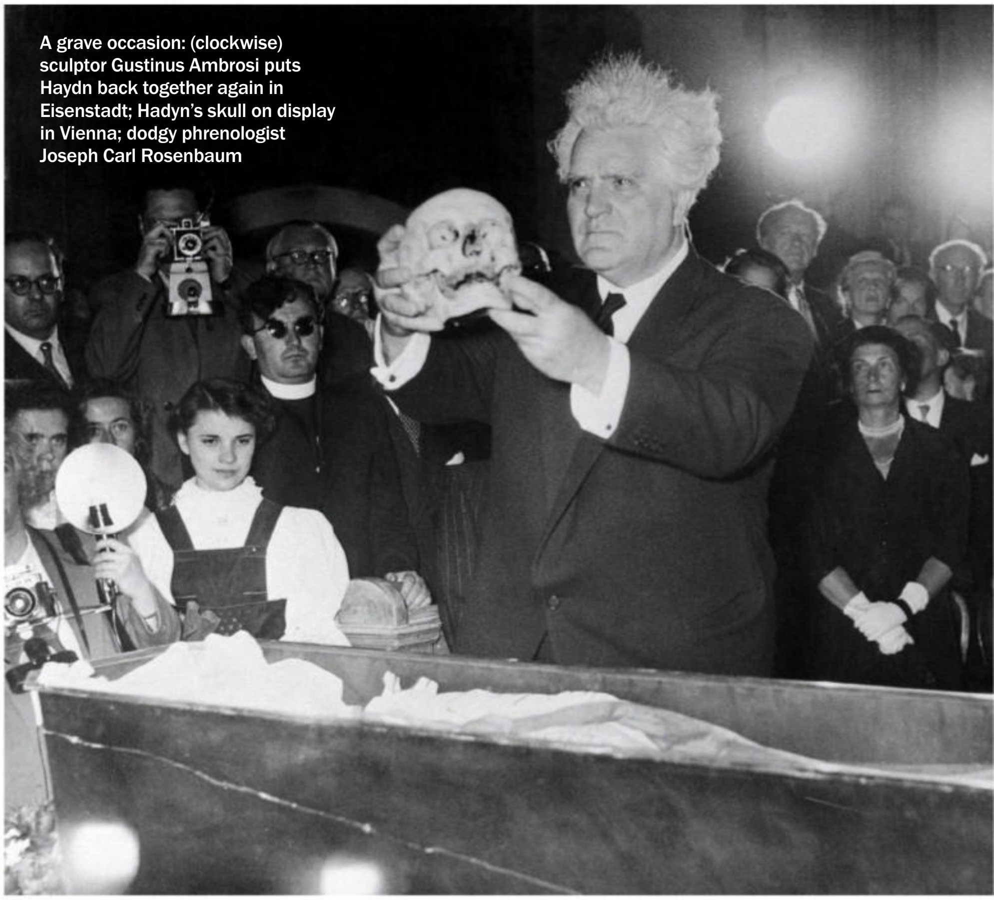


Born: Denver, CO, US
Career highlight: Becoming part of the Scottish Opera family as an emerging artist; and winning the Northern Aldborough Festival New Voices Competition. Music has made my life so beautiful, and any opportunity to share that beauty with others is a highlight.
Musical heros: Composer Julius Eastman, mezzo Lorraine Hunt Lieberson and pianist Yvonne Loriod are all figures I admire for their unapologetic excellence – and for their raw creativity, vulnerability and collaborative skill.
Dream concert: To perform Maxwell Davies's *The Medium* at Orkney's St Magnus Festival. It's a magical place, and a life-changing piece.

Christopher Lowrey *Countertenor*

Born: Providence, RI, US
Career highlight: Making my debut at the Metropolitan Opera, New York. As an artist who struck out and took a sometimes winding path, coming 'home' and feeling celebrated and valued meant a lot.
Musical heros: Sopranos Renée Fleming, for her extraordinary vocalism, and Sandrine Piau, for her exquisite taste.
Dream concert: A fantastically over-the-top affair featuring my dearest musical colleagues and idols. I imagine the Tallis Scholars chiselling Renaissance motets, the Berlin Phil pouring forth Strauss... with some space for me to sing some Handel arias with a sh*t-hot period band!

TIMEPIECE This month in history



A grave occasion: (clockwise) sculptor Gustinus Ambrosi puts Haydn back together again in Eisenstadt; Hadyn's skull on display in Vienna; dodgy phrenologist Joseph Carl Rosenbaum

JUNE 1954

After 145 years, Haydn welcomes back his head

On 31 March 1809, Joseph Haydn turned 77, passing the day unostentatiously at his home in Gumpendorf, a village near Vienna. Nine days later, Austria declared war on France, and within a month Napoleon's cannonballs were flying over Gumpendorf, one landing in the courtyard of Haydn's property. These were hardly the placid conditions the ailing composer needed, and they cast a shadow as he stoically endured his final illness.

Haydn died on 31 May, widely acknowledged as one of classical music's greatest masters. Two weeks later, a memorial service was held in Vienna, with the cream of Viennese society present. The burial itself, constricted by wartime conditions, had been a quieter affair, unadorned with pomp and circumstance. A simple ceremony was held in Gumpendorf, and Haydn was laid to rest in Hundsturm Cemetery.

He would not, however, rest there long. Just days after the interment, two enthusiasts of phrenology, a newly invented pseudo-science relating bumps on the skull to personality traits, approached the gravedigger at Hundsturm with a proposition – might he be interested in digging Haydn up,

cutting off his head, and delivering it for phrenological investigation?

Attracted by the sum of money offered, the gravedigger didn't hesitate. On 4 June, he performed the gruesome act of decapitation, passing the severed skull to Joseph Carl Rosenbaum (who knew Haydn from serving the aristocratic Esterházy family) and Johann Nepomuk Peter, a prison governor. The composer's head had already decomposed significantly, causing Rosenbaum to retch as he placed it in a carriage.

An hour-long examination was all it took for the amateur phrenologists to conclude that the 'music bump' on Haydn's head was indeed impressively developed – hardly a startling conclusion. Stripped to the bone and bleached, the skull was then placed in a bespoke display cabinet topped by a lyre, and stored in Johann Peter's home along with other skulls he had collected.

TING-RU LAI, REBECCA FAY, GETTY

At some point in the following decade, a ghoulish game of cranial pass-the-parcel was started. It began when Johann Peter tired of his collection and passed some of the skulls (including Haydn's) on to Rosenbaum. Then, in 1820, Prince Nicholas Esterházy II, Haydn's final patron, moved to bring the beloved composer's remains back to the family estate at Eisenstadt. On exhumation, however, the corpse was found to be headless.

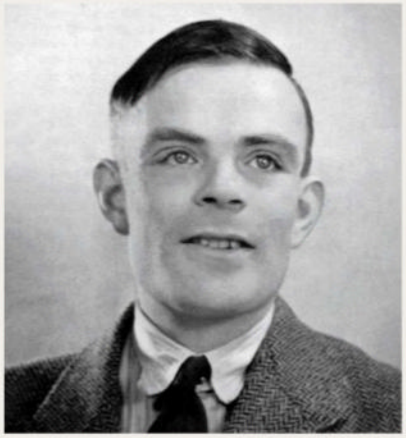
Peter and Rosenbaum were quickly identified as the culprits, and an enraged Nicholas demanded the return of his former employee's head. Instead, he was eventually given a skull purported to be Haydn's, but in fact belonging to someone else. This was placed on top of Haydn's shoulders, and the composer was

Haydn's skull was put in a glass case on a piano, and viewed by visitors

re-buried at Eisenstadt. Rosenbaum kept the real Haydn head, reportedly confessing to the deception on his deathbed.

The skull reverted to his old friend Peter, and eventually (in 1895) passed via two further owners to Vienna's prestigious Gesellschaft der Musik. There it was put in a glass case on a piano, and viewed by visitors. Then, in 1932, Prince Paul Esterházy V constructed a handsome marble tomb at the Bergkirche in Eisenstadt, expressly designed to reunite the long separated parts of Haydn's body.

That reunion finally happened 22 years later, on 5 June 1954. Haydn's head was blessed by the Archbishop of Vienna then taken in a hearse to Eisenstadt where, at the Bergkirche, the sculptor Gustinus Ambrosi raised the skull dramatically in the air before placing it with Haydn's skeleton in a new copper coffin. This was laid in the marble tomb, where it remains to this day, a short walk from the palace for which much of Haydn's greatest music was created. ***Terry Blain***



Fatal dose: mathematician Alan Turing

Also in June 1954...

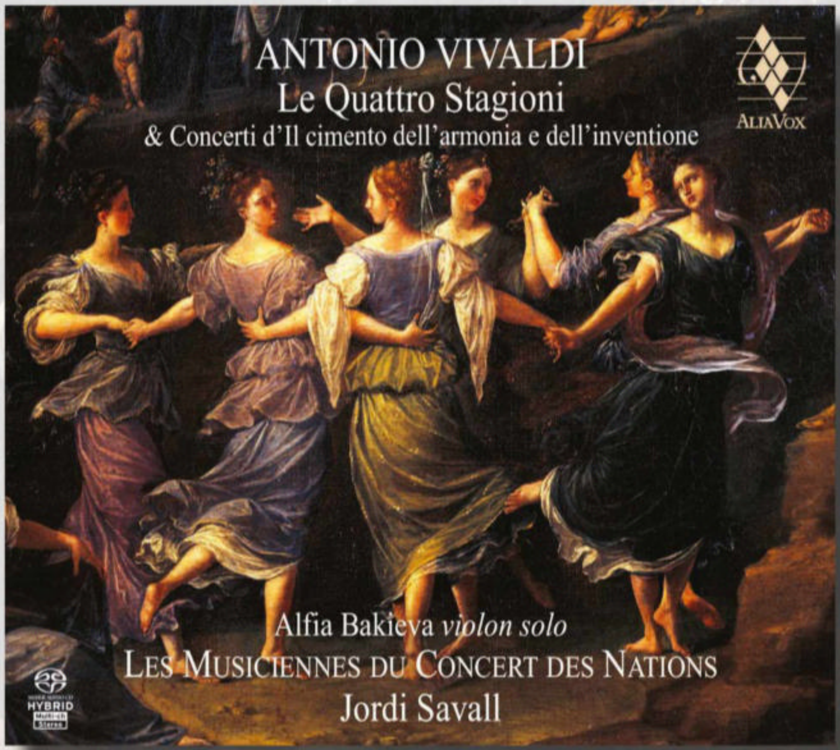
7th: Alan Turing, the mathematician, computer and cryptographer whose brilliance was key to breaking the Enigma codes in World War II, dies at his house in Wilmslow, Cheshire, aged 41. With a half-eaten apple found beside his bed and cyanide detected in his body, a verdict of suicide by poisoning – possibly inspired by his fascination with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* – is recorded.

13th: In a concert to mark the **London Symphony Orchestra**'s 50th anniversary, John Barbirolli conducts the premiere of Vaughan Williams's Tuba Concerto at the Royal Festival Hall, with the LSO's principal tuba Philip Catelinet as soloist. Aware that tuba players are often viewed as figures of fun, Catelinet prevents his wife from attending the concert, arguing that he would 'rather suffer alone'.

15th: On the eve of the FIFA World Cup in Switzerland, representatives from 28 national football associations meet at the Hotel Euler in Basel to discuss setting up a new federation to oversee the game in Europe. In October, the foundation of the **Union of the European Football Associations** (UEFA) is announced.

17th: Pierre Mendès France is elected the prime minister of France. With his country's colonial policies proving a drain on resources, he immediately seeks to end the Indochina War and to reduce the French presence in Tunisia. Closer to home, he attempts to tackle alcoholism and boost the dairy trade by urging his countrymen to drink milk rather than wine. His time in office lasts seven months.

29th: American architect Buckminster Fuller patents the **geodesic dome**, a self-supporting hemispheric structure made up of interlocking triangles that enable it to withstand significant weight. Fuller is not, in fact, the inventor of the design – the German Walther Bauersfeld had built one in Jena in the 1920s – but he is credited with popularising it in the US.



ALIAVOX

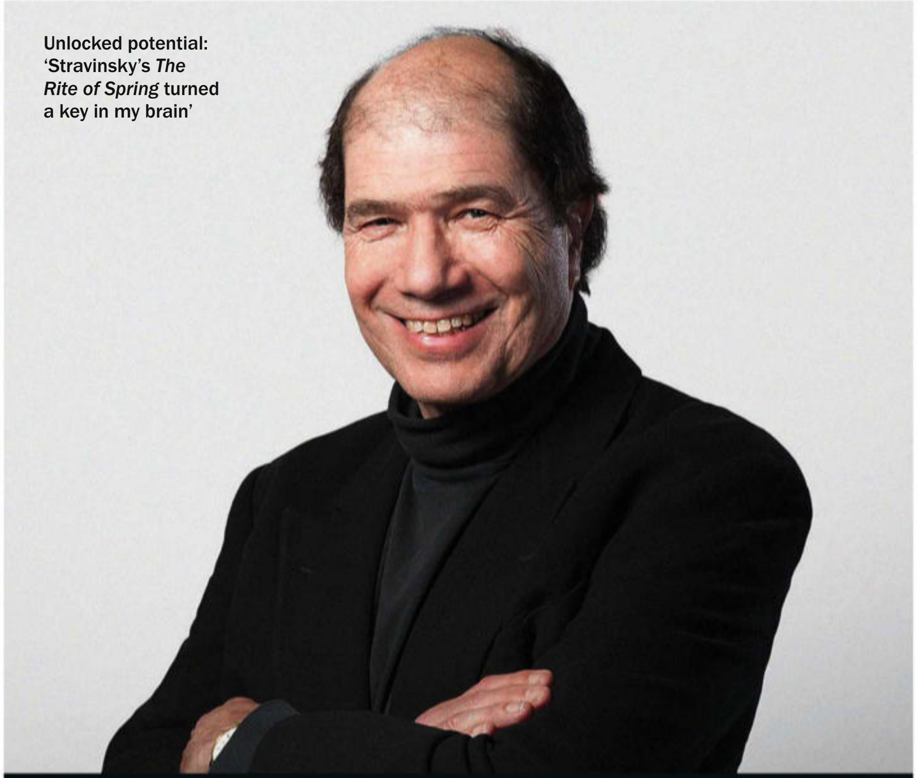
Jordi Savall

new album

Vivaldi
The Four Seasons

For this new recording of Vivaldi's Four Seasons, Jordi Savall conducts an all-female orchestra, as Vivaldi did in his time at the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice. The soloist Alfia Bakieva plays a Francesco Ruggeri violin, built in 1680 in Cremona, Italy, on loan from the Jumpstart Jr. Foundation. This double album offers the recording of the Four Seasons with and without the sonnets written by Vivaldi, which shed a particularly revealing light on Vivaldi's work.

MEET THE COMPOSER



Unlocked potential: 'Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* turned a key in my brain'

Michael Berkeley

A multi-faceted composer, broadcaster and member of the House of Lords, Berkeley followed in his father Lennox's musical footsteps to become one of Britain's most revered composers. His latest album, *Collaborations*, features new works written for friends alongside classic live recordings and is released on Orchid Classics on 14 June.

I was always aware that my father was a composer. He was working every morning in his study, and he would show me what he was working on and I got very intrigued by it. I was improvising at the piano from the age of six or seven, and I remember my mother saying to him, 'Would Michael ever be any good?' Lennox said, 'He might, but he's going to have to do a hell of a lot more work!' And he was right.

I used to sing myself to sleep. I was in the top of the house, in the attic, and I would improvise, imagining I was creating great masterpieces! Lennox heard me singing and thought it was quite a useful voice, so he got me to audition for Westminster Cathedral Choir School. The master of music then was the wonderful George Malcolm. It was a brilliant framing as a boy, because we were singing Victoria, Byrd and things like that. And then Benjamin Britten, who I used to see with my father because he was my godfather; he'd come for picnics in North Norfolk and we'd drive over to Aldeburgh. George persuaded Ben to write his Missa Brevis for us.

Lennox took me to hear Stravinsky conduct *The Rite of Spring*. He introduced me to him at the Festival Hall. I thought the sheer visceral sexuality of that music was so exciting, and that also turned a key in my brain.

I did singing, composition and piano at the Royal Academy of Music. My piano playing has never been very much, but it was enough to play in a pop group called 'Seeds of Discord'. It taught me something about communication, because at a point in one's life where you were unlikely to get vast audiences coming to hear you, suddenly we would descend on a town hall in Bedford, in our Commer van, and unleash 'Satisfaction', or whatever, and we'd actually be able to transform a thousand wallflowers into a gyrating mass. That was a great buzz.

Three works to discover

Or Shall We Die? *(1983)*
Berkeley's thrilling oratorio, with words by Ian McEwan, brings into sharp focus the terrifying ease of man's ability to destroy. It represents a tug-of-war between heart and mind, reason and feeling, written at the height of Cold War tensions.

Baa Baa Black Sheep *(1993)*
The first of Berkeley's three operas is based on Rudyard Kipling's autobiographical short story, which retells his jarring boyhood relocation from India to a brutal new home in England.

Speaking Silence *(2009)*
This song cycle, written for baritone David Wilson-Johnson, features poetry by Yeats and Rosetti and deals with the emotional fallout of an ended love affair.

When I left the Academy I showed a piece I'd written, called *Meditations for Strings*, to conductor Raymond Leppard. He said, 'You've got lots of ideas, but you need more technique and more training.' And he was right. I managed to study with Richard Rodney Bennett, who had studied with Lennox, but he had also studied with Pierre Boulez. He made me rewrite a string trio 11 times over a period of 18 months until I could justify the presence of every single note, and that was a very formidable technique that I needed.

Britten said to me, 'You must try not to write at the piano; write out of your head.' I tend to start with a sketch on paper and then quite often go onto a computer; of course that plays it back, which is useful. Lennox once told me that when he was studying in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, Soulima Stravinsky – Stravinsky's son – was a fellow pupil and he'd take him back to the Stravinsky household. I asked Lennox if Stravinsky was composing at the piano, and he said, 'Well he was, but he put a blanket in his upright because he didn't want to hear a piano sound, but he wanted to try out things.' So I don't compose at the piano, but I like to try one or two things out.

One of the important things about being a composer is that you're constantly setting yourself new boundaries and new challenges. For example, writing for the guitar; I went and studied with with Julian Bream in order to be ready. I've written a piece for the Japanese *shakuhachi* called *Glass Tears*. It's very difficult, because with the *shakuhachi*, unlike Western instruments, you can't ask the player to play one note quiet and another loud; they all have a really defined volume – which is a nightmare, but I like a challenge.

BBC/JUDE EDGINTON

Music to my ears

Let it snow: Chiyan Wong defies the springtime

The *BBC Music Magazine* team's current favourites...

Charlotte Smith *Editor*
An Easter trip to Crantock in Cornwall presented the perfect opportunity for a clifftop walk, complete with headphones. First up, to accompany crashing waves and gliding seagulls, was **Vaughan Williams**'s *Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus*, performed by the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, followed by his Six Studies in English Folksong. Finally, Copland's *Appalachian Spring* from the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra – more prairies and hoedowns than windswept shores, but equally affecting!

Jeremy Pound *Deputy editor*
The 'spring is in the air' playlist of Tom Service's first *Saturday Breakfast* programme on Radio 3 in April was accompanied by incessant wind and rain outside, so I can imagine the ironic grins when **Tsfasman**'s 'Snowflakes' was programmed for the following week. Played by pianist Chiyan Wong, this sparkling example of Soviet jazz made a perfect companion to what turned to be – of course – a bright, sunny morning.

Michael Beek *Reviews editor*
While exploring the tiny, cobbled streets of Stockholm's Gamla Stan (Old Town), I was drawn into its striking German Church by the sound of beautiful music. A local choir was in rehearsal for its forthcoming Easter performance of **Bach**'s *St John Passion*, and their sound was heavenly. More tourists piled in, immediately hushed by this moment of peace; a welcome pause from the hustle, bustle and blustery wind outside.

Steve Wright *Content producer*
Jackson Brodie, the lovable weather-beaten protagonist of Kate Atkinson's detective novels, never has much time for classical music – until he discovers **Beethoven**'s Fifth Symphony. He inspired me to go back and revisit a work I thought I had essentially finished with – and, of course, there have been fresh rewards. In particular, the transition from the *Scherzo* to the finale is a moment of spine-tingling tension, followed by joyous release.

A perfect partnership: Philippe Jaroussky first worked with Christina Pluhar on Monteverdi's *Teatro d'Amore*

REWIND

Great artists talk about their past recordings

CHRISTINA PLUHAR *Harpist, theorbist and conductor*

MY FINEST MOMENT
Monteverdi *Teatro d'Amore*
Nuria Rial, Philippe Jaroussky et al; L'Arpeggiata/Christina Pluhar
Erato 236 1402 (2009)

This disc of Monteverdi secular music was a very special moment for me. Among other things, it was the first time I worked with the countertenor Philippe Jaroussky, when he was quite young and still an emerging artist. We also had the wonderful opportunity to be the ensemble-in-residence at the Utrecht Festival of Early Music. Before the festival started, we were able to record this CD in the big hall of the TivoliVredenburg – an amazing venue, for me one of the most beautiful, and with some of the best acoustics in the whole of Europe.

And we had it all to ourselves! We had a couple of concerts during the festival, one of which featured the programme from this CD, so we essentially launched it as part of that year's Utrecht Festival. The disc itself features a range of secular works by Monteverdi, and some of them are given some quite jazzy, experimental improvisation – particularly the madrigal *Ohime ch'io cado* (Alas for me, I tumble down). We got carried away by this amazing concert hall and started experimenting with improvisations. It was one of those projects where a lot

of things came together nicely. And, of course, it was the start of a great creative relationship with Philippe.

MY FONDEST MEMORY

La Tarantella *Antidotum Tarantulae*
Lucilla Galeazzi, Marco Beasley; L'Arpeggiata/Christina Pluhar
Alpha ALPHA503 (2002)

L'Arpeggiata's third CD was our first time recording traditional early music, rather than the music of a particular composer. This disc arose out of a fascination of mine: *tarantismo*, a disease discussed in musical and medical books from the 17th century. Physicians believed it was caused by the bite of the wolf spider, *Lycosa tarantula*. It resulted in a kind of dancing mania, and the only cure was through music. What's more, the music needed to be different depending on the temperament – choleric, sanguine, etc – of the victim and also on the type of spider.

This resulted in a huge selection of dances, or tarantellas, designed to cure the disease. In order to find out which particular music would cure the patient, the band would visit them and start playing them many different songs. Once they found the song that had the correct effect, they would play it over and over. This could last for several days! This tradition lasted for centuries in Italy – in fact there was a film made in the 1950s showing it still in practice.

I started to collect all the different scores of 17th-century tarantellas, and so this recording project came together. Some wonderful singers were involved, and the fascinating story of the tarantella inspired us all.

I'D LIKE ANOTHER GO AT…

Monteverdi
Vespro della beata Vergine
L'Arpeggiata/Christina Pluhar
Erato 641 9942 (2011)

It's not that I think this recording is not good – in fact, I think it's quite nice. However, it was one of those moments where I didn't have exactly the singers I wanted, and there were inevitably some compromises. We were lucky enough to be able to record this in the Arsenal in Metz, just before performing in a concert there. The dates were not flexible, but of course we accepted the offer to record there. But then, as sometimes happens, once I'd fixed the date, it turned out that a couple of the singers I wanted were not available for the recording. So I assembled a cast that was pretty good – say, 85 per cent strength – but not my dream cast.

Can I put my finger on what is missing? Perhaps a hint of passion and emotion. It was very well performed, but I could imagine going deeper into some of the most poignant moments. The other two discs I have mentioned contained moments that were even more emotional than I could have imagined beforehand, and I hope that comes across on disc. But to get that every time is almost impossible – you are very lucky if it happens most of the time.

Wonder Women, the new album from L'Arpeggiata and Christina Pluhar, is out now on Warner Classics.

KENNY CHEUNG, MICHAL NOWAK, MARCO BORGGREVE, DAVID KORNFELD, LAURE BERNARD

Living the dream: BIS founder Robert von Bahr

My Hero

Pianist ***Paul Wee*** salutes the insatiable curiosity and adventurous spirit of BIS record label founder ***Robert von Bahr***

As a full-time commercial barrister, I knew I would struggle to convince any established record label to take me seriously, even with (what I thought was) a compelling recording of Alkan's Symphony for Solo Piano and Concerto for Solo Piano. But my doubts proved no match for the inimitable Robert von Bahr, the founder of BIS Records.

Robert is that rarest of creatures: a record label executive guided solely by his ears and the courage of his own convictions. He listened to the tape. He liked what he heard. And off we went. We met in Stockholm, where we chatted like old friends over some lovely Brunello wine, and so began a treasured friendship.

Robert's words over the years have been wise, witty and devastatingly funny. But I have been inspired even more by his actions, which embody a life lived in the service of music and musicians. Where Robert believes music deserves to be heard, he makes this happen: BIS hasn't championed composers like Kalevi Aho, Sebastian Fagerlund, Alfred Schnittke, Nikos Skalkottas and Allan Pettersson for financial gain, but to place their music before new audiences.

Even in standard repertoire, Robert's determination (in the face of conventional wisdom) to back artists and projects he believes in is unique: see, for example, his support for the then-unknown Bach Collegium Japan and Masaaki Suzuki in their Bach Cantatas series. And now, in his 80th year, Robert has done what is necessary to ensure that BIS and its legacy will continue, by securing its future with Apple. For doing so much to serve so many artists and composers so well for so long, Robert is unquestionably one of my heroes.

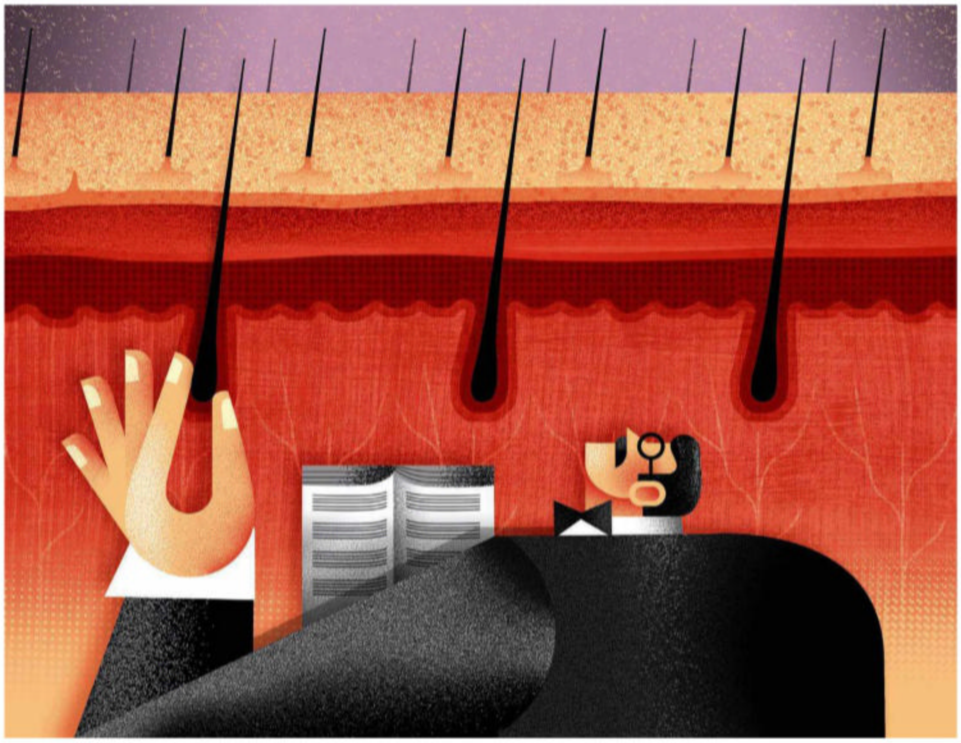
Paul Wee performs Alkan's Concerto for Solo Piano at Wigmore Hall on 15 June.

THE LISTENING SERVICE

Thrills and chills

Why do we get goosebumps when we listen to thrilling music? It's a primordial physiological response – but is no less meaningful for that, says **Tom Service**

ILLUSTRATION: MARIA CORTE MAIDAGAN



Goosebumps: our bodies' involuntary reaction to situations of heightened emotional intensity, physical frissons that we can't ignore, we can't control, and we can hardly explain. And of all the art-forms that give us goosebumps most passionately, it's music that reaches the parts that nothing else can.

But where do they come from? Why does our hair stand on end, why do our spines tingle and why does our flesh turn into poultrified feverishness when we listen to the climax of Ravel's 'Asie', when the holy grail is reveal to Parsifal, or when the larks trill in the sunset of Strauss's *Four Last Songs*?

While the physiological processes are pretty well understood, we haven't been able to say too much about why they happen. Why do our bodies do this to us at moments of musical and emotional climax? What's the use of goosebumps?

Thanks to the neuroscientist Diana Omigie and the Music, Mind and Brain research group at Goldsmiths, we're getting to know more about their evolutionary origins. Observing how different parts of our brain are engaged at those spine-tingling moments, Omigie says that our 'dopaminergic' systems are engaged – the neurotransmitters that relate to dopamine.

And while we might think dopamine is all about giving us pleasure, it's really a hormone that's released when our senses are attuned to imagining a potential outcome of a situation, and being satisfied – or surprised – when our predictions are confirmed, or denied. That's why, however much you hear those spine-tinglingly radiant phrases at the end of Brahms's Third Symphony – or whatever symphonic conclusion most moves you – the music's power to turn us into a mass of goosebumps never diminishes. Our expectations are met every time when we hear the piece, and its power to give us the chills only increases.

Goosebumps and tingles are part of our brain's ancient fight-or-flight response

And there's more. Omigie says that the chills and tingles are also part of our fight-or-flight response – triggered in the oldest and deepest parts of our brains – and that our bodies react the way they do because they're trying to calm our systems down in the wake of emotional extremis. Which means that goosebumps are unconscious acts of physiological regulation in response to all that dopamine flooding our systems.

That might sound a lot less fun than the irresistible intensity we experience when we're in the throes of the music. Yet that fleeting feeling of ecstasy makes physical and emotional sense: we can't sustain these peaks of anticipation and reward for more than a few seconds, and yet we're always seeking them out in our listening lives. Goosebumps are our bodies' unconscious reward for our relationship with the pieces we love the most, and they're proof of music's ancient, animal power over our bodies.

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FAREWELL TO...

Last Night legend: conductor Andrew Davis in 2010

Andrew Davis Born 1944 *Conductor*

As the conductor of the Last Night of the Proms on no fewer than 12 occasions between 1988 and 2018, Sir Andrew Davis became one of the most widely recognised figures in British classical music – thanks not least to memorable moments such as his 'This is the very model of a modern music festival' speeches in 1992 and 2000, based on Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*. That sparkling wit, accompanied by a trademark glint in the eye, was just one of the elements that made him such a popular character in concert halls and opera houses on both sides of the Atlantic over a career spanning more than 50 years. Born and brought up in Hertfordshire, Davis studied at the Royal Academy of Music, King's College, Cambridge (as an organ scholar) and the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome before becoming assistant conductor at the BBC Scottish Symphony and Philharmonia orchestras. In 1975, he was appointed music director of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, a post he held until 1988, when he became music director at Glyndebourne Opera and then, the following year, chief conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra too. He would remain in both posts until 2000, when he headed back across the Atlantic as the new principal conductor and music director of Lyric Opera of Chicago – the US city would be his home for the rest of his life. He also made a wealth of acclaimed recordings – particularly but not exclusively of English music – including an Elgar *The Dream of Gerontius* and *Sea Pictures* for the Chandos label that won the BBC Music Magazine Choral Award in 2015. He was knighted in 1999.

Michael Tanner

Born 1935 *Critic and author*

Though primarily remembered as the opera critic of *The Spectator*, Michael Tanner also wrote on a wide range of musical subjects – Beethoven and Schubert were particular favourites – for publications including *BBC Music Magazine*, for whom he was a regular reviewer and feature writer. The author of *Wagner* (1997) and *The Faber Pocket Guide to Wagner* (2010), his knowledge of and enthusiasm for the German composer was second-to-none, though always presented in an engaging and accessible way. Sitting on the fence, meanwhile, was never an option for a writer who, while occasionally getting under the skin of some readers, was adored by countless others.

GETTY

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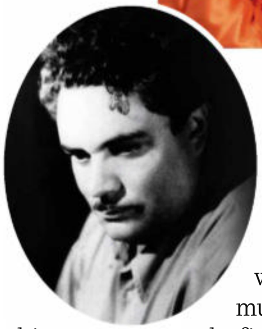
THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

Pick a theme… and name your seven favourite examples

This month, composer Gabriela Ortiz selects her favourite Latin-infused classical works

Gabriela Ortiz is a Mexican composer whose music combines elements of folk, rock, African and Afro-Cuban influences, as well the avant-garde. She was recently appointed as Debs Composer Chair at Carnegie Hall in New York, where her works will be showcased during the 2024-25 season. Performed by María Dueñas, her new Violin Concerto 'Altar de Cuerda' features on the second release of Gustavo Dudamel's Latin American series with the Los Angeles Philharmonic on Platoon.



MARA ARTEAGA, GETTY

Silvestre Revueltas Sensemayá

This piece, based on a poem about a serpent by the Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén, really captures its rhythmic power and essence: whenever I hear the opening, which starts with a slithering motif on the bass clarinet, I immediately imagine this serpent that is coming to bite me. Revueltas wrote the piece after the Mexican Revolution of 1910, so it really belongs to the Mexican nationalist period. But unlike other nationalist composers, Revueltas managed to sound simultaneously Mexican and completely himself. He was a real genius, which makes it all the more tragic that he died so young, aged only 40.

Carlos Chávez Tambuco

Like Revueltas, the Mexican 20th-century composer Carlos Chávez tends to be put in the 'nationalist' box. But because he lived much longer, he had time to absorb aspects of the European avant-garde. *Tambuco,* which he wrote in 1964, is a pioneering piece of percussion repertoire: really difficult to play, rhythmically complex and colourful. The introduction is so original, starting with the sound of rattles. It just goes to show that 'Mexican' means more than wearing a sombrero and playing music centered around the theme of the fiesta; we do have complex music.

Alberto Ginastera Piano Concerto No. 1

This virtuosic 1961 piece has a great combination of ingredients. On one hand, it's very modernist and abstract, but Ginastera also had a nationalistic aesthetic, drawing on Argentine rhythms. I love the particular way that he mixes the folkish character with a sense of modernism, creating a musical language that is very unique, very universal but at the same time very Ginastera, without ever sacrificing any sense of his characteristic intensity.

Heitor Villa-Lobos Chôros No. 10

Normally, when you think of Villa-Lobos you think of his *Bachianas Brasileiras*, or his repertoire for guitar. But my personal favourite is this work for chorus and orchestra written in 1926. Villa-Lobos deploys the choir in a very onomatopoeic way, using hardly any words, to create something flamboyant, colourful and extrovert that really showcases Brazilian culture. It is direct and visceral - the kind of music you want to dance to. And it is so much fun, both to sing and to play.

Tania León Inura

Tania León is a Cuban-American composer living in New York. She won the Pulitzer Prize three years ago and is an incredible promoter of Latin American composers. This 2009 piece for voices, percussion and strings is amazingly eclectic in its influences. The voices sound extremely contemporary and dissonant, but León also draws on the Afro-rhythmic features of Cuban music, using folk percussion instruments that classical percussionists often find hard to play.

Antonio Estévez Cantata Criolla

Venezuela has a wonderful folk music tradition called *Música Llanera*, a key feature of which is the use of maracas. In this 1954 work for tenor, baritone, choir and orchestra you have a maraca player right at the front of the orchestra, which is so dramatic. Plus, the narrative of the piece is great: all about a singing contest between a Venezuelan cowboy and the Devil. It's basically a Faustian story, but told in a very Venezuelan way. I love this mix: the way that Estévez digs right into the roots of Venezuelan folk music and combines it with classical influences.

Javier Álvarez Temazcal

The Mexican composer Javier Álvarez, who died recently, wrote this piece in the 1980s while studying music at university in London. It's scored for maracas, electronics and tape – which, if you think about it, is a crazy combination. And remember, this was written in the pre-digital era, when you had to physically cut the tape. But Álvarez does it so ingeniously, creating something that is theatrical, fun and totally unique. Check it out: you will never, ever see anything else like it.

Interview by Hannah Nepilova

Latin grooves: Gabriela Ortiz enjoys the music of her compatriots; (opposite) Tania León and Silvestre Revueltas

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Ryan Wigglesworth

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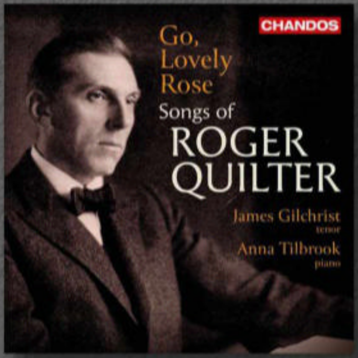

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James Gilchrist | Anna Tilbrook

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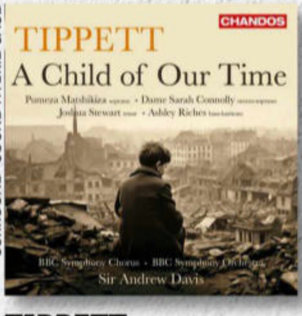

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Richard Morrison

How many orchestral appointments should a single conductor take on?

In certain moods, conductors can be very mischievous about each other. Case in point? A few years ago, Riccardo Muti told me a story about Valery Gergiev. Meeting the Russian maestro by chance at an airport, he said: 'Valery, I hear you conducted 37 concerts in a single month. How is that even possible?' Without a moment's hesitation, Gergiev replied: 'Because I use several orchestras, Riccardo.'

That encounter sprang to mind last month when the Chicago Symphony Orchestra – where Muti has been music director for 13 years – announced it had appointed his successor: the 28-year-old Finnish conductor Klaus Mäkelä. I can just imagine what Muti might say to Mäkelä if their paths cross. 'Klaus, I hear you conduct dozens of concerts every month. How is that possible?' And I can imagine Mäkelä's reply: 'Because I use four orchestras, Riccardo.'

Four? Well, do the math, as they say in Chicago. Mäkelä is already music director of two European orchestras – the Oslo Philharmonic and Orchestre de Paris. In 2027 he becomes chief conductor of an even better one, Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw. In the same year he also takes on the Chicago job, 4,000 miles away. But it's not a clean swap of two for two. He will conduct concerts in Amsterdam and Chicago before he takes up his official roles with them. And after 2027 he says he will return 'on a regular basis' to Oslo and Paris.

So, four orchestras – all looking to this Finnish whizzkid for inspiration and leadership. But don't forget Mäkelä also guest conducts. Perusing the London Symphony Orchestra's future plans, for instance, I see a familiar name booked for November at the Barbican. Presumably he has a spare night and can't find anything to watch on Netflix.

His agent and his record company, Decca, must be in seventh heaven. All that commission! All that exposure on two continents! I don't blame them, in a way. The music business is exactly that: a business. It was never pure and monogamous. If you look back at the careers of, say, Daniel Barenboim or George Solti, or at Andris Nelsons and Fabio Luisi today, you see there's nothing new about holding multiple music-directorships spanning the Atlantic – though it's hard to think of a twenty-something conductor, past or present, who had relationships with so many top orchestras simultaneously.

> Four orchestras will be looking to this Finnish whizzkid for inspiration and leadership

What I do find crazy is the attitude of the orchestras themselves. Where's their pride, their desire to forge their own unique identities, their willingness to work intensively with one conductor over many years to explore repertoire in depth – as Simon Rattle did in Birmingham, or Mark Elder in Manchester, or, going further back, Karajan in Berlin, Mravinsky in Leningrad and Koussevitzky in Boston?

It's noticeable that several of Mäkelä's appointments – in Oslo, Paris and now Chicago – were made on the basis of just one or two guest-conducting appearances with those orchestras. Did the players, or the boards controlling the orchestras, really gather enough evidence with their own eyes and ears to judge whether he was what they needed? Or was there an element of jumping on a bandwagon and hoping it was heading in the right direction?

I'm not disputing the assertion that Mäkelä is potentially a major conducting talent. But the key word is 'potentially'. The jury is still out. His Sibelius recordings I found uneven but interesting, his *Rite of Spring* pretty dull. He may blossom, he may burn out. Only time will tell. But it's not good for him, or classical music generally, that wherever he goes he's the basket into which all eggs are put.

If orchestras are to have a future, they need to re-build their foundations in their own communities – with schools, with different social and ethnic groups, with people without much music education and with new sorts of donors and supportive businesses. To do that they need music directors as committed to their cities as the orchestras themselves must be. The age of the jet-setting maestro is over, or should be – for environmental, financial, social and indeed musical reasons.

There are outstanding conductors out there who would be passionate about firmly locating in one city and doing that rebuilding role. Mäkelä doesn't strike me as one of them. If he wants to establish some sort of air-miles world record, that's his choice. But there's no need for orchestras as distinguished as the Chicago Symphony and Concertgebouw to help him.

Richard Morrison is chief music critic and a columnist of The Times

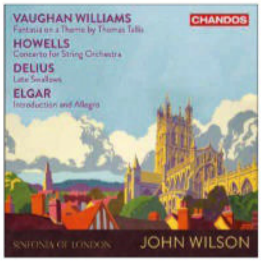
BBC music MAGAZINE AWARDS 2024
IN ASSOCIATION WITH BANG & OLUFSEN
RECORDING OF THE YEAR

AWARDS 2024 WINNERS

English master

A famous concert in 1910 inspired conductor John Wilson's latest triumphant recording, this time of four composers close to home

Recording of the Year and Orchestral Award



John Wilson

Vaughan Williams • Howells • Delius • Elgar

Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis; Concerto for String Orchestra; Late Swallows; Introduction and Allegro

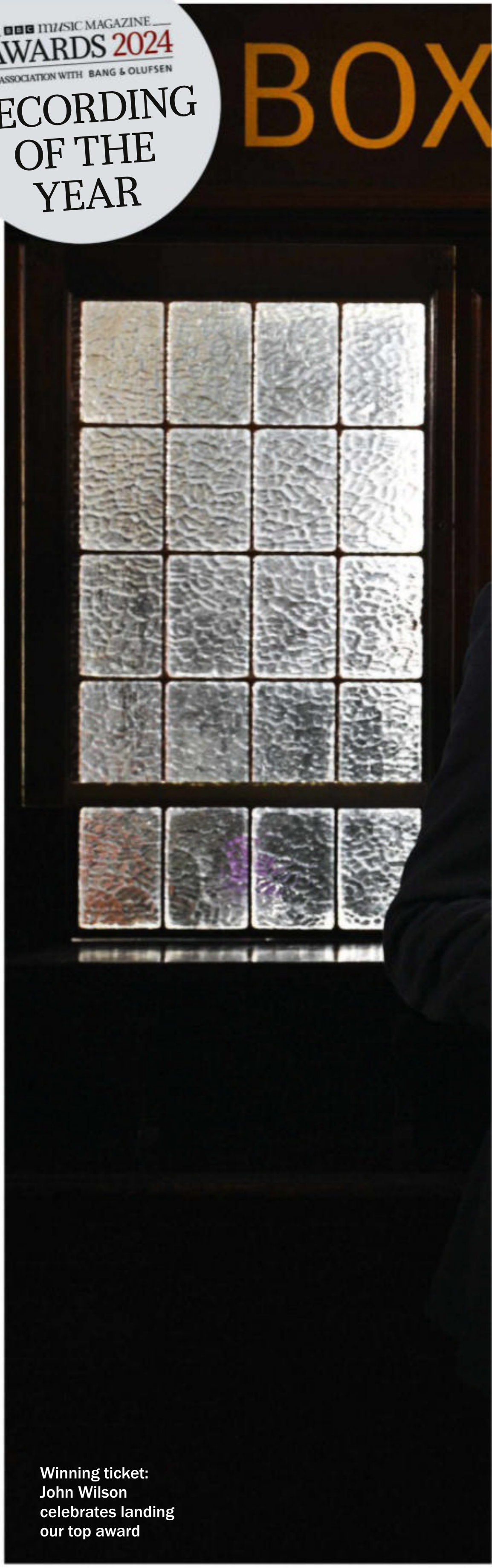
Sinfonia of London/John Wilson

Chandos CHSA 5291

John Wilson has become a familiar face on the BBC Music Magazine Awards pages. In 2020, the conductor and his Sinfonia of London ensemble took the Orchestral Award for their recording of works by Korngold. They repeated the trick in 2021 with Respighi's Roman Trilogy, and again in 2022 with works by Dutilleux. 2023 proved a rare blank, but they have made up for it this year by taking both the Orchestral Award and the Recording of the Year itself. What's more – spoiler alert – flick over a couple of pages from here, and you'll find them cropping up again in another category.

Five wins in five years, performing music by composers of five different nationalities. So, what's the secret? 'I don't know really!' replies Wilson. 'I've been conducting for 30-odd years, and I guess I've built up a repertoire of pieces that I now feel ready to commit to disc. Getting to know pieces and playing them many, many times before you record them... that's rather an old-fashioned concept, isn't it!'

The cover of this year's winner – recorded, as with the others, for Chandos – is adorned with a colourful picture of Gloucester Cathedral, the building that provides the thread running through a programme of English pieces for string orchestra. It was here, during the Three Choirs Festival in 1910, that Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* received its first performance, with Elgar and a starstruck young Howells in the audience. Howells's 1938 Concerto for String Orchestra follows the *Fantasia* on the album which, after Delius's *Late Swallows*, is rounded off by Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro*. The central movement of the Howells is, incidentally, dedicated to Elgar, who guided him in person about how to write for strings.


Winning ticket: John Wilson celebrates landing our top award

JOHN MILLAR

Reviewing the disc last April, Terry Blain highlighted the Sinfonia of London's performance of the *Tallis Fantasia* for bringing out the 'sharp, impassioned edges' that so often seem to get overlooked amid the work's dreamy, Renaissance-inspired soundworld. 'I'm only doing exactly what Vaughan Williams asks us to do!' says Wilson by way of explanation. 'There's a temptation with some of these pieces to do what's convenient rather than what is true. It is a very technically challenging piece to conduct, and it takes an iron-clad discipline to pull it off. I'll happily admit that my strategy for it was greatly aided by John Barbirolli's famous 1960s recording [also with the Sinfonia of London], which in many respects is the template for how I think the piece goes.'

'You really need to play the hell out of Howells's Concerto'

Similarly, while the name of Herbert Howells tends to conjure up thoughts of sacred choral music soaring ethereally in Anglican cathedrals, Wilson says that his Concerto for Strings demands real grit: 'You really need to play the hell out of it! It's a big work, which needs incision, intensity and a lot of stuff you might not instantly associate with Howells. It's something of a virtuoso piece as well.'

And who better to supply such virtuosity than the Sinfonia of London? Initially founded in 1955, the ensemble had seemingly petered out at the end of the 20th century. But in 2018 Wilson decided to reform it, handpicking its members from the best orchestras in the UK and beyond, and establishing a rare bond between players and conductor.

'I can't tell you what a difference that makes,' Wilson enthuses. 'I only have to raise my left eyebrow and the third desk of the violins knows exactly what I mean! The musical relationships, not just between me and the players but between the players themselves, have become so deep-rooted. That said, we still have to work very hard to make the recordings, so it's gratifying when they are appreciated like this.'
Jeremy Pound

Newcomer Award

George Xiaoyuan Fu

Mirrors

Works by Ravel, Unsuk Chin, Rachmaninov, Freya Waley-Cohen et al

George Xiaoyuan Fu (piano)

Platoon PLAT15459

'Ravel is one of my favourite composers, and *Miroirs* has so many interesting figurations and textures – I could practise it for hours!' enthuses George Xiaoyuan Fu (above). His winning album *Mirrors* isn't a straightforward performance of Ravel's homage to the French avant-garde, however. Instead, it presents musical reflections – later works by composers ranging from Rachmaninov to Freya Waley-Cohen and Unsuk Chin – interspersed with the suite's movements.

'I'm interested in the transition from Romanticism to the modern day,' he says. 'People don't tend to think there's much in common between impressionism and contemporary music. But when you talk to composers, that repertoire is part of their cultural reference and they're inspired by it. Why not play on those links?'

The reflections are double sided, and the contemporary pieces also pave the way to a greater understanding of Ravel. 'The more I work with living composers, and understand how they think, the better I'm able to understand how past composers might have thought,' says Fu. 'Ravel was an experimental composer. His works sounds very tonal to us now, but if you read the reviews of his time, you realise that audiences had a lot of difficulty with his music. Juxtaposing adventurous contemporary works with *Miroirs* contextualises that challenge and helps the audience to embrace how he sounded at the time.' *Charlotte Smith*

Playing for the home crowd: Bomsori Kim joins the Danish National Symphony Orchestra to perform Nielsen

Concerto Award Bomsori Kim

Nielsen ***Flute Concerto*, Clarinet Concerto**, Violin Concerto^***

Ulla Miilmann (flute)*, Johnny Teyssier (clarinet)**, Bomsori Kim (violin)^; Danish National Symphony Orchestra/Fabio Luisi

Deutsche Grammophon 486 3487

'I didn't expect to win this award at all,' laughs Bomsori Kim. 'The other candidates were so strong!' Yet DG's album – dedicated to Nielsen's towering Flute, Clarinet and Violin Concertos – has real pedigree, coming, as it does, at the end of a ground-breaking Nielsen symphony cycle for conductor Fabio Luisi and the Danish National Symphony Orchestra (DNSO).

Kim, who takes on the formidable Violin Concerto, learned the work especially for the recording, which was captured during two live performances in Copenhagen in October 2021. 'I had performed the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto with Fabio previously,' she explains, 'and it felt great to work with him. We understood each other very easily, so when he thought of me for this project, I was really honoured.'

Despite his experience with Nielsen, Luisi hadn't conducted the Violin Concerto before the recording – but every player of the DNSO 'knew the work by heart,' according to Kim. 'We had long discussions with the orchestral musicians, and they were all experts. Can you imagine the feeling of recording a work in front of a Danish audience who knew it so well!'

'And it's not standard repertoire,' she continues. 'Technically it's very demanding, and structurally it's not like a typical concerto. Since this recording, I've played it quite a lot in public, but I always have to plan far ahead, as it needs much more time than other concertos. Unlike the DNSO, other orchestras are much less familiar with it, too, so I need to be 100 per cent convincing as the soloist to lead them. Nielsen was a violinist himself, so he wanted his concerto to be strong and to avoid clichés – he definitely avoided them with the ending, which is so humorous and light. It's always fun to see the audience's reaction.' *Charlotte Smith*

Musical mash-up: John Andrews brings together concertos by three distinct composers

Premiere Award John Andrews

Lutyens • Maconchy • Errollyn Wallen

Works for Piano & Orchestra

Martin Jones, Rebeca Omordia (piano); BBC Concert Orchestra/John Andrews

Resonus RES10315

'Some of the music on this disc is pretty intense and complicated, so it was a delightful surprise to receive this award.' It's fair to say that conductor John Andrews wasn't expecting his disc of unrecorded British piano concertante works to scoop our Premiere Award.

So how did an album containing everything from thorny 1960s serialism – Elisabeth Lutyens's Music for Piano and Orchestra – to Errollyn Wallen's joyously extrovert Piano Concerto come together? 'Like many of the best projects in life, it came about through a series of accidents,' Andrews reveals. 'Back in 2020, what would become this disc started life as three separate projects. We had just finished Malcolm Arnold's *The Dancing Master* with the BBC Concert Orchestra (another BBC Music Awards winner), and we were looking for other interesting projects – in particular, a disc of as-yet unrecorded piano concertos.

> 'We went in with some trepidation as this is difficult music'

'We had just booked some time to record Elizabeth Maconchy's *Dialogue* when Covid hit, so that project was frozen in time. Elsewhere, pianist Martin Jones was keen to cover Lutyens's concertante works, so that was all bubbling away. And, in another part of the forest, Errollyn had been commissioned by Julian Lloyd Webber to write a concerto for pianist Rebeca Omordia.

'When we all reassembled post-Covid, the most interesting plan seemed to be to take the best bits of all these ideas – and slam them together. We knew there would be some stylistic incongruities between these three very different composers, but we thought that those contrasts might make for an interesting programme.'

The sessions, Andrews recalls, were 'happy, productive places. We went in with some trepidation, as this is difficult music. Errollyn's concerto is very flamboyant and extrovert; Lutyens's two works are uncompromising mid-20th-century serialism and take no prisoners.

'I don't think people appreciate what a stunningly versatile group the BBC Concert Orchestra are – they'd just come from recording Shirley Bassey, but they ate this music for breakfast. They cede nothing to the finest contemporary groups in the world.' *Steve Wright*

HARALD HOFFMANN, EDMOND CHOO, IGA GOZDOWSKA

Above and beyond: Jakub Józef Orliński explores hidden gems

Vocal Award | Jakub Józef Orliński

Beyond ***Works by Monteverdi, Caccini, Frescobaldi, Kapsberger, Saracini et al***
Jakub Józef Orliński (countertenor); Il Pomo d'Oro
Erato 5419772645

'Early Baroque music is really difficult,' explains Jakub Józef Orliński. 'When I was younger, I knew it was tricky but I couldn't work out why. But now I know – there are so many options, so much creativity and so many choices to make, and no one to make them for you. *Beyond* took a lot of work, as we would all share ideas and then work out the best ones to show off the music. I was super proud of what we achieved and, if I'm honest, super proud of myself!'

Beyond's title refers to how the album's music transcends the era in which it was written, though it might also describe its position in relation to the usual repertoire – no fewer than ten of the works on it are premiere recordings, while names such as Carlo Pallavicino and Giovanni Cesare Netti hardly trip off the tongue. This wonderful haul of hidden gems, says Orliński, is thanks to musicologist Yannis François, who researched the programme.

'Early Baroque music is so creative, with so many artistic choices'

'He is a genius. He has this very rare skill of knowing which pieces work for different singers. Whenever I have a concept that I'd like to try out and tell him that it might be nice to put this piece with that piece, he goes and finds all the other music that can make up a programme. *Beyond* is a long album as we had so much music to choose from, because everything was so nice.'

As well as recording the album, Orliński showcased the music of *Beyond* in a 21-concert tour. Expressing his delight that so many warmed to such unfamiliar music, the Polish countertenor explains how one particular composer grabbed his own affection. 'I was really surprised by Netti,' he says. 'His music is incredibly beautiful and interesting, and when we found pieces by him we carried on digging for more. Nobody knows about him, so we wanted to give him a spotlight – he needs more attention.' *Jeremy Pound*

Feeling the heat: guitarist Sean Shibe recreated South American warmth in Scotland

Instrumental Award | Sean Shibe

Profesión

Works by Barrios, Ginastera, Villa-Lobos
Sean Shibe (guitar) *Pentatone PTC 5187 054*

Sean Shibe has a string of knockout albums to his name. His debut *Dreams and Fancies* was nominated for a BBC Music Magazine Award in 2018, described as the best guitar playing the jury had ever heard. Yet in the public vote he was pipped to the post. It's a different story this year – and his dazzling recording, *Profesión*, has won him the Instrumental category.

'It's an album I'm really happy with so it's nice to see some sort of success for it,' says the Scottish guitarist, 32. Its title comes from a poem by Paraguayan composer-guitarist Agustín Barrios Mangoré. 'The poem talks about how the guitar is not only an instrument that is used to play South American music but it's actually an instrument that has formed the basis of a lot of South American music on all instruments,' explains Shibe. 'It appealed to me that someone like Ginastera demonstrated the truth of the poem. The open strings of the guitar formed ostinatos, accompaniments and textures in his Harp Concerto and his earlier works written before he ever wrote for the guitar.'

Shibe chose his programme of Ginastera, Barrios and Villa-Lobos to illustrate the inexorable development of a distinctive South American style. 'Barrios engages with the guitar as a sort of shamanistic presence in South American culture, but he also treats it pianistically, a sort of classical object that emerged in the 1800s,' he says. 'Villa-Lobos and Ginastera took it further, offering, as Julian Bream put it, a vulgarly imaginative idea of what the guitar could do.'

Profesión was recorded last August in one of Shibe's favourite venues, Crichton Church in Scotland. 'It's very isolated, very quiet, very beautiful and it's also very cold, so you need a lot of jumpers and thermal long johns,' he says. 'It's not exactly a venue that sums up the vibrant warmth of South America.' It did, however, offer Shibe the sound he was after: 'I want a substantial halo to it, and the church has a perfect acoustical warmth.' *Rebecca Franks*

HONORATA KARAPUDA, BEN EALOVEGA

Musical champion: conductor John Wilson

Opera Award | John Wilson

Rodgers & Hammerstein

Oklahoma!
Nathaniel Hackmann, Sierra Boggess et al; Sinfonia of London/John Wilson
Chandos CHSA 5322(2)

A musical winning the opera category? Absolutely. '*Oklahoma!* is a seminal piece from a period of 20 years-or-so onwards from 1943 in which the musical play came of age,' reasons conductor John Wilson, 'and it's not fanciful to say that some of those pieces have operatic dimensions. In them, there's a synergy between the stage and the orchestra pit – every instruction in the score has a dramatic implication – and to do them justice, it takes as much care and attention in performance, execution and casting. *Oklahoma!* takes real singing!'

Providing that singing on this, the first ever recording of *Oklahoma!* in its complete form, is a cast that have the music running through their very veins. However, as Wilson explains, even they had their work cut out to make the music come alive in audio-only format. 'With no visuals, you have to go that bit further in projecting the theatrical element,' he says. 'You have to act through the song itself, prioritising the text without losing any of the musical intensity and intention. It takes a lot of specialist knowledge and training.'

'An essential set' was the verdict of *BBC Music*'s reviewer George Hall. Or, as he might have said, 'Oh, what a beautiful recording...' *Jeremy Pound*

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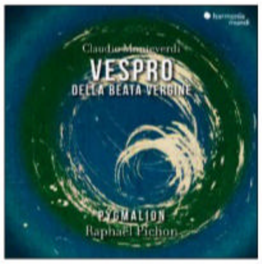
Mind and spirit: Raphaël Pichon explores an exciting musical landscape in Monteverdi

PIERGAB

Choral Award | Raphaël Pichon



Monteverdi
Vespro della beata Vergine
Pygmalion/Raphaël Pichon
Harmonia Mundi HMM 902710.11

Conductor Raphaël Pichon is thrilled with his Choral Award – not least because it's for his recording of a work that has had a major impact on his life. 'When I was nine, I started singing in a boys' choir, and one of the first pieces we sang was the Monteverdi Vespers,' he reveals. 'That was one of the biggest moments of my musical life – a truly mystical experience. I had a feeling of discovery, of entering a new cosmos for the very first time. From the opening "Deus in adjutorium" all the way to the end, the Vespers is a galactic, spiritual experience, with a unique chemistry between language, space, music, acoustics and rhetoric, and I have been obsessed with it ever since.'

> 'I had a feeling of discovery, of entering a new cosmic world'

The recording itself took place under some fairly unique conditions. 'It was December 2021, and we were starting work on a new stage production (*Le lacrime di Eros*, about the birth of opera), in Amsterdam for autumn 2022. But then, two days before the start of the production, Amsterdam went into its final Covid lockdown. It was a heartbreaking moment.

'But I said to my team, we can't simply do nothing for the next two months... let's record the Monteverdi Vespers! So we did. It was a moment of resilience, of survival, a sudden coming together of energy. Everything was closed, no one was doing anything, so we concentrated all our energies on recording this amazing work.

'We also knew that we were in danger, as the virus was coming back strongly with this new variant, so we needed to do it fast and give absolutely our best – because at any hour someone might get ill. And, in fact, on the very last day that's exactly what happened – so we had to be quite inventive. It was a very memorable recording process, and I hope that listeners can feel our passion for this music and for what we do.' *Steve Wright*

Into the light: the Calidores look 'under every note' in late Beethoven

Chamber Award | Calidore Quartet

Beethoven ***Late String Quartets***
Calidore Quartet *Signum Classics SIGCD733*

'We learned a lot about how we play together.' Ryan Meehan, violinist with the Calidore Quartet, is recalling the making of their Chamber Award-winning recording of Beethoven's Late Quartets. 'This is very difficult, inward-looking music, and it taught us so much. We learned to look in detail under every note, and we've definitely come out of it a more unified ensemble.'

Recordings of the Early and Middle Quartets will soon follow. Will they need different approaches for those? 'For the "Earlies", definitely,' Meehan reflects. 'I think there is less difference between the "Middles" and "Lates" in terms of emotion and expression. That said, the Middle Quartets have this unique blend – the transparency of the Early Quartets, combined with the proportions and breadth of sentiments of the "Lates".' Violist Jeremy Berry agrees. 'In some ways, the Middle Quartets are the trickiest. Op. 59 No. 1, for example, has the transparency of Haydn, but the emotions are massive and it's extremely technically difficult. You can't get away with anything.'

'We want to bring Beethoven to life and celebrate his gifts'

Do the Calidores each have favourites from across the cycle? 'Op. 131 encompasses everything Beethoven had to offer, looking back to his early writing and ahead into Romanticism,' says violinist Jeffrey Myers. 'It feels like the most complete of all the pieces.' Berry opts for Op. 130: 'The "Cavatina" is one of the most beautiful, introspective pieces of music in the repertoire – and to follow that with the insane cacophony of the "Grosse Fuge", which probably would have sounded something like death metal at the time, is incredible.'

Do they hope to have brought some new perspectives to these much-recorded works? 'We want to be as true as possible to Beethoven as a composer and a human being, so we have been rigorously faithful to his markings,' reveals cellist Estelle Choi. 'After one performance, one of our mentors told us, "I wish Beethoven could have heard that – I think he would have liked it." We just want to bring this amazing man to life, and to celebrate the many gifts he left us.' *Steve Wright*

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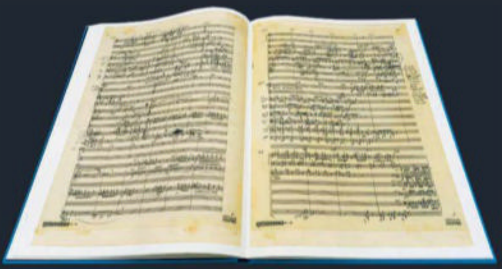

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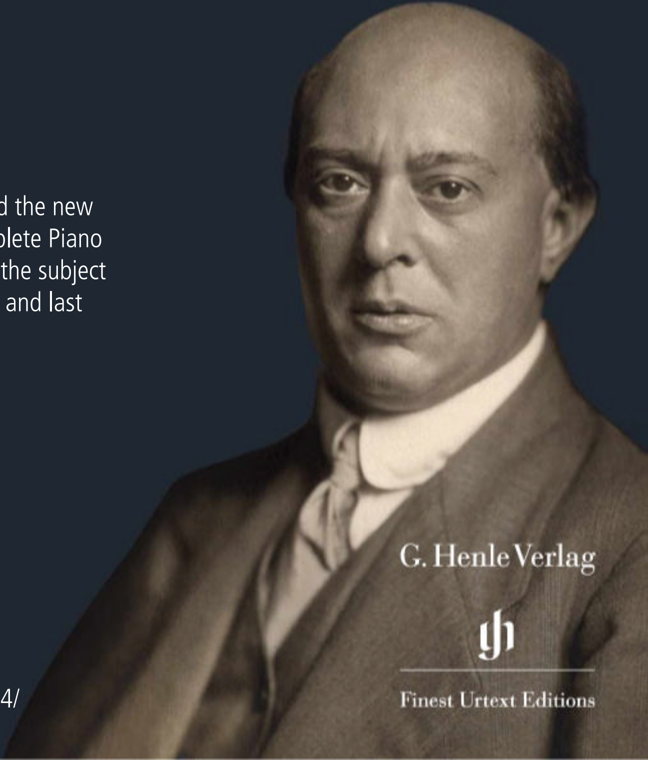

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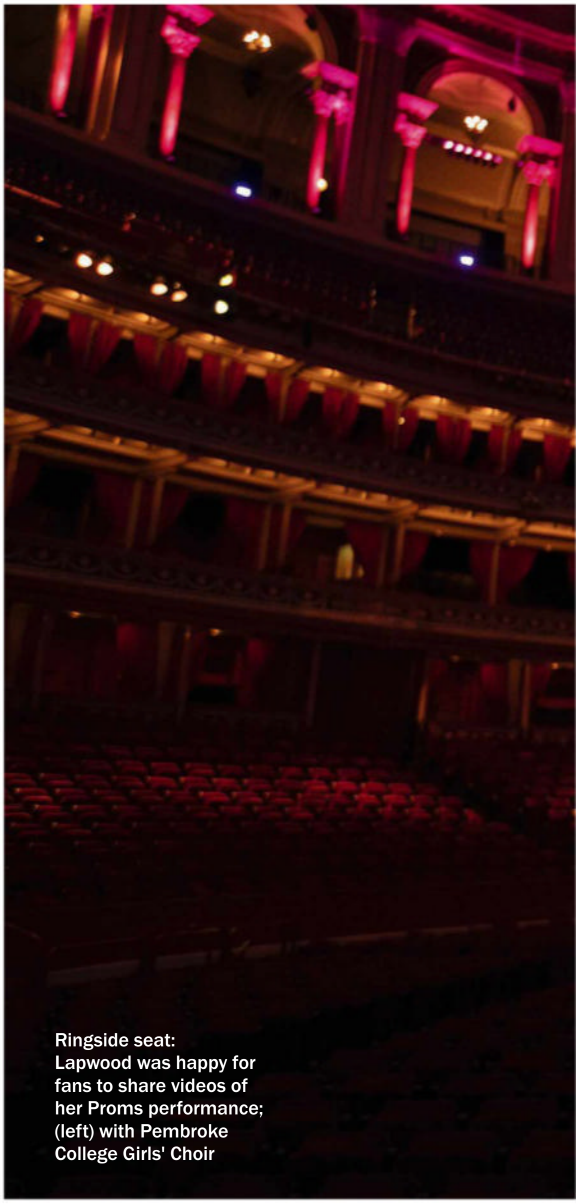
Anna mirabilis

Anna Lapwood's career skyrocketed in 2023, thanks to a happy instinct for connecting with her army of fans, writes Rebecca Franks



Ringside seat: Lapwood was happy for fans to share videos of her Proms performance; (left) with Pembroke College Girls' Choir

BBC Music Magazine Personality of the Year

Anna Lapwood

Anna Lapwood has many nicknames. She's been dubbed the 'TikTok organist', while *Tatler* described her as 'the Taylor Swift of classical music'. Then there are her official monikers: director of music at Pembroke College, Cambridge, associate artist of the Royal Albert Hall and artist-in-association with the BBC Singers. The 28-year-old British organist and conductor can now add another name to her list: *BBC Music Magazine*'s Personality of the Year.

'It's really surreal,' she tells me over Zoom. 'None of us necessarily know whether we're doing things right. You take what comes and hope you're doing the right thing along the way. And so, to get an award that recognises I am doing something right is very nice.'

2023 was a milestone year for Lapwood in her already blossoming career. After several years recording with the 'absolutely phenomenal' (her words) Signum Classics, she signed as an exclusive artist with Sony Classical. Her debut album *Luna* followed, cementing her status, said *BBC Music Magazine*'s critic, as a 'true ambassador for classical music'. Add to that Lapwood's debut solo Prom, which was a late-night recital with a dazzling light show accompaniment, and an MBE for services to music, and it was a year to remember.

Yet for Lapwood, what really matters is how she developed as an artist over that time. 'My musical world feels like it blew outwards in 2023,' she says. 'I grew up listening to a lot of classical music and didn't really know anything about pop or electronic music. What I've realised this year is that classical music can encompass so much more than we might initially expect: doing collaborations with electronic artists and realising I can add a classical spin, or bringing elements from the pop world into how I'm performing. It feels like some blinkers have been removed and I'm now more creative and inspired.'

Much of that experimentation has happened as a result of Lapwood's role at the Royal Albert Hall, where through-the-night practice sessions have led to unexpected collaborations with a whole host of musicians and actors, from electronic artist Bonobo to actor Benedict Cumberbatch. Thanks to Lapwood's thriving social media accounts, audiences at home have a ringside seat: her videos give a close-up view at the organ console.

'I grew up as part of the social media generation. I had Bebo and MySpace accounts and was very used to the idea of posting as part of how I experienced the world, as opposed to thinking of it as an add-on,' she says. 'I tweeted all through senior school and carried on when I started working as a professional musician. What has surprised me in the last couple of years is the numbers. The sheer scale of TikTok

NICK RUTTER, HUGH WARWICK

is beyond anything I think I'd realised.'

To put numbers on it, Lapwood's videos currently have 22.2 million likes. No, that's not a misplaced decimal point. 'It's a whole different ballgame,' she says. 'There's potential to reach young people just where they are spending their time, and to say, "You know what, I love this thing, you might love it too. Come along for the ride and let's see what happens."'

Part of the secret to online success lies in putting a face to a name, she says. 'People are used to connecting with music via the person making it. If you look at the pop world, people are fans of the artist. They tend to stick with the artist as they go through all different shifts in musical style, trying out new things and experimenting. We're a little bit more self-conscious in

'At the heart of almost all my videos is the concept of me as a human being'

the classical world. We are the vehicle for music to travel through. I don't think those have to be mutually exclusive.

'At the heart of almost all my videos is the concept of me as a human being,' she continues, 'whether that's people seeing my reactions in real time to performing a mash-up with an audience of 5,000 people, or whether it's what it's actually like to do an overnight rehearsal, or the challenges of playing an organ with a really awkward pedalboard.'

If Lapwood is bringing the organ to your smartphones, she's also happy for audiences to bring their phones into concerts to film her playing. 'I see it as a fundamental way to generate a sense of community around performances and live events,' she says. 'For my Prom, one of my favourite things was that over the next week I was tagged in hundreds of videos and stories. Getting to see the perspective of people in the crowd was intensely moving, and it created this little community. In the same way that I haven't been to the Taylor Swift *Eras* tour, and yet I feel like I know what happens on it because I've seen so many viral fan videos, I think the same can be true of our concerts.'

> I've never thought of myself as a female composer, just as a composer – and that has stayed with me

THE BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE INTERVIEW

Anna Clyne

As she takes on a new role in association with the BBC Philharmonic, the New York-based composer speaks to **Claire Jackson** about uniting art and music in her works

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRISTINA KERNOHAN

What came first, the chicken or the egg? Or, in the case of Anna Clyne's work, the sound or the visuals? When the British-born, US-based composer came to create *Night Ferry*, the turbulent sea-washed soundscape inspired by Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, she placed large panels around her studio. Alternating between painting and composing, Clyne transferred the brushstrokes into notes – and vice versa – until the projects became co-creations, inextricably linked. 'As the music evolved so did the mural, and as the mural evolved so did the music,' she says. 'At the end there was a 15 foot-long painting and a 25-minute composition.'

Blackened, jaw-like waves rise up from the seabed, while a polaroid warns that 'pain comes from darkness'. Strings race woodwind, spurred on by rumbling brass. *Night Ferry* is a thrillingly evocative piece, strengthened by the deep colours on the page and in the score. It's easy to see why the 2012 work was selected as one of the Ten Pieces, the BBC's flagship educational resource for classical music. 'A lot of art uses some of the same structural elements as music,' explains Clyne. 'There's gesture, rhythm, composition, shapes, intensity. Graphic scores can be very liberating.' Since then, Clyne has continued to explore this composing method. She's currently focussed on colours as part of the acrostic piece *Palette*, where seven movements are each devoted to plum, amber, lava, ebony, teal, tangerine and emerald.

'I'm creating large canvases alongside the score,' she says, speaking from her home in the Hudson Valley, New York State. 'The piece draws on my love of abstract expressionism; I hope to share the artwork in some way as part of the audience's experience of the music.' *Palette* is due to be premiered early next year by the St Louis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Stéphane Denève, followed by

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co-commissioners the New World Symphony and the National Orchestra Institute. It's the latest of several pieces linked more officially to art: *Abstractions* (2016) is a suite of five movements inspired by five contrasting contemporary artworks from the Baltimore Museum of Art and from the private collection of Rheda Becker and Robert Meyerhoff, while 2020's *Color Field* muses on the colour orange, from the tone used in Hermès's iconic designs to Mark Rothko's *Orange, Red, Yellow* (1961). From there, Clyne considered Scriabin's synaesthesia – the experience of associating specific colours with pitch and tonal centres – and drew on the fiery hues the Russian composer associated with particular keys (orange was G). Similarly, *ATLAS*, Clyne's first piano concerto – performed by Jeremy Denk and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra at Symphony Hall this May – was inspired by Gerhard Richter, with music linked to the 5,000 photographs, drawings and sketches contained in four volumes.

Clyne is clearly not the first composer to draw on the connections between visual art and music (see box, p42), but she's become one of the most prominent musicians working in this area in recent years. According to Bachtrack's 2022 survey – using data from the listing website's 27,124 events (featuring around 14,000 concerts and 9,000 opera performances) – Clyne was the eighth most performed contemporary composer in the world, featuring alongside John Adams, Philip Glass and James MacMillan. Since the pandemic, she's been prolific (15 works in 2020 alone, including several large-scale ensemble pieces) and has recently co-developed (with husband Jody Elff) a format called Augmented Orchestra (AO). 'It's real-time processing of the orchestra,' explains Clyne. 'It transforms the sound,

TODD ROSENBERG, CHRISTINA KERNOHAN

'I hope the audience will enjoy the visual art as part of the musical experience'

creating new versions of the instruments – all very closely integrated.'

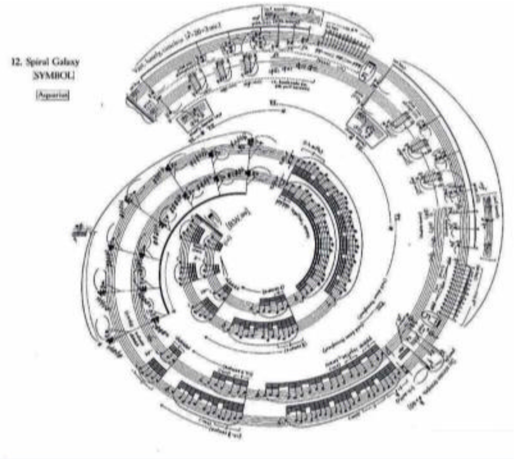
I catch a glimpse of my expression on the screen. My confusion is obvious. So, it's a fancier type of looping, with electronics as part of the orchestra? Clyne patiently explains again, using as an example *Wild Geese*, the 2023 piece inspired by the Mary Oliver poem of the same title. 'There's a double bass and cello line that's almost like a walking bass; towards the end, we shift the double bass down by two octaves, and it suddenly sounds like an organ coming through the PA system, but it's integrated so you can't determine really what's acoustic and what's the altered sound. It's not amplification, it's processing and then reintroducing the process sounds.' This imaginative wizardry is possible

Worth a thousand words: (above) Clyne's 15-foot painting was created alongside *Night Ferry;* (left) the composer has created several similar pieces

thanks to custom software designed by Elff. The official description is as follows: 'The sounds produced by the orchestra are augmented by computer-controlled processes across multiple modalities including tone, amplitude, dynamics, location and environment. The augmented sonic information is seamlessly integrated with the physical orchestra such that it is perceived as a natural extension of the source, and a fundamental component of the composition itself.' It's becoming another of Clyne's hallmarks, and will be used in *Palette* and *The Gorgeous Nothings*, premiering at the BBC Proms by The Swingles and the BBC Philharmonic.

'We have eight microphones within the orchestra,' says Clyne, 'on the flutes, the oboes, first violin, double basses, percussion, the bicycle wheel –' she stops, considering my expression. (Once again, the art of impassivity eludes me.) 'It makes a wonderful sound,' she continues, by way of explanation. 'One on the vibraphone and one on the voices. The score says when to open up an input. For example, I'll have these moments in the vibraphone where the microphone opens and does a live process of pitch shifting, moving it down an octave, and the sound comes out of the speakers that are within the orchestra. It's very organic and it's integral to the compositional process.'

The Gorgeous Nothings, based on Emily Dickinson's *Envelope Poems*, is one of several works created for the BBC Philharmonic as part of Clyne's role as composer-in-association, a position she will hold until 2026. The first piece was *Glasslands* (2022), a saxophone concerto recently premiered by Jess Gillam and conductor Mark Wigglesworth at Nottingham Royal Concert Hall.



Round we go: George Crumb's 'Spiral Galaxy'

Picture this...

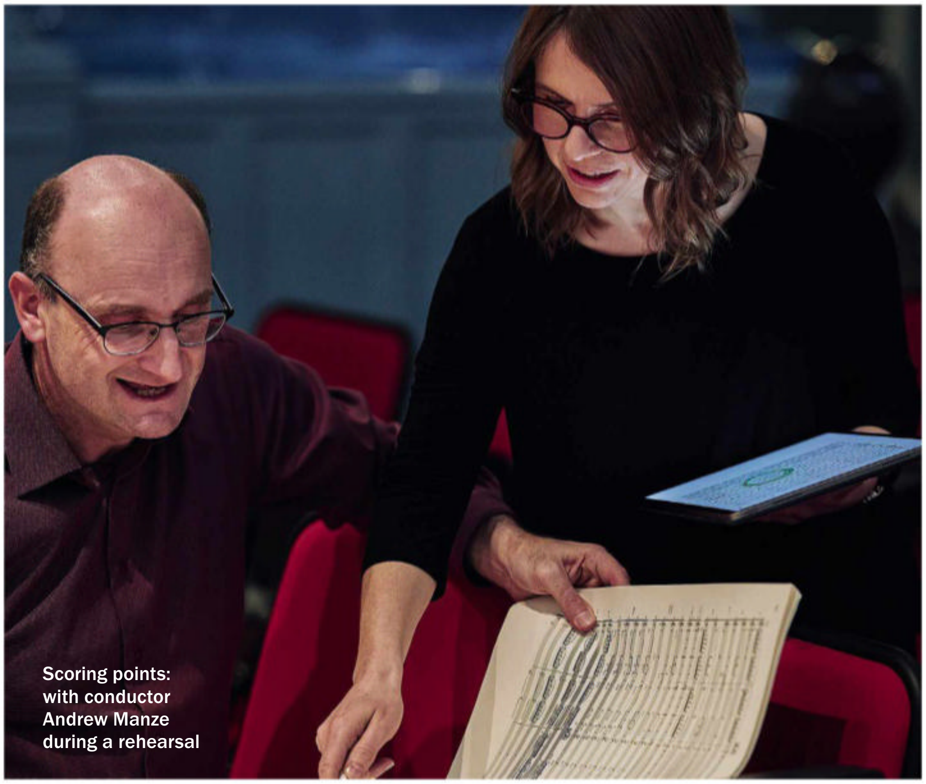
Links between art and music

From Cézanne's *Overture to Tannhäuser* to Musorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Steve Reich's *Reich/Richter*, the links between visual art and music have long been strong. In the 20th century, artists began to use musical references in paintings' titles – Piet Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*, Marsden Hartley's *Musical Theme* (*Oriental Symphony*), Paul Klee's *Fugue in Red* – while composers experimented with musical depiction beyond the usual staff notation. Cage's Concert for Piano and Orchestra (1958) features circles of varying sizes, with multiple lines through the diameter referencing different notes, and Morton Feldman uses grid systems for some of his works. (His connection to visual art was formalised in 1971's *Rothko Chapel* to accompany paintings by Mark Rothko.)

György Ligeti not only enjoyed scribbling notes in multi-coloured pencil, he also developed his own artistic form of notation. *Artikulation* (1958) is shown as a linear progression of bold shapes in flat colours, created by graphic designer Rainer Wehinger in 1970.

Perhaps the most charming of graphic scores are those by George Crumb (pictured above), who uses traditional notation in unusual ways. 'Spiral Galaxy' from *Makrokosmos 1* (1972) whirls the stave like a snail's shell; an instrumental interlude from 2003's *River of Life* shows the percussion part at the centre of the page, with other parts growing as petals from the middle.

GETTY, CHRISTINA KERNOHAN



Scoring points: with conductor Andrew Manze during a rehearsal

Gillam traverses the mystical landscapes conjured by Clyne's score, suggesting the cries of a banshee, a spirit said to herald the death of a family member. The soprano saxophone perfectly mimics the folkloric wailing, with jerky melodies that reach into the upper register. There's longing, too, in the plaintive pastorale of the central movement, and ethereal moments amid the virtuosic chase.

A juxtaposition between delicate lyricism and raw sound also underpins *Weathered*, a clarinet concerto composed for Martin Fröst, also in 2022. Each of the five-minute movements highlight different weathered elements – 'Metal', 'Heart', 'Stone', 'Wood' and 'Earth' – with timbres loosely inspired by each title. As with *Glasslands*, the solo part is idiomatic and it's a surprise to discover that Clyne is a cellist not a woodwind player. 'Martin was brilliant: he demonstrated the extremities of the register – he has an instrument that goes down a tone lower than a normal clarinet – and also some unusual techniques, like singing and playing simultaneously,' says Clyne. 'He'd leave me voice notes saying, "This is your friendly clarinettist from Sweden" with little recordings of the work in progress!'

Clyne works at an upright piano, with a laptop and digital score resting on a Singer sewing table. Her chair nestles into the right angle; a cup of coffee perches at the side. Although she's lived in the US since 2001, there's no hint of an American accent in her speech, but her music bears the fingerprints of a career moulded by contemporary Americana. 'I was at Edinburgh University, and I spent my third year as an exchange student at Queen's University in Canada. The academic year at Queen's finishes early and Edinburgh starts quite late, so I went back via New York. I was waitressing and playing cello in rock bands and meeting lots of interesting composers, musicians, choreographers and film makers, and I just fell in love with it. As soon as I graduated from Edinburgh, I moved back to New York with just a suitcase and my cello.'

Clyne subsequently studied with Julia Wolfe, co-founder of Bang on a Can, the radical collective that transformed contemporary music in the US during the early 2000s. Clyne attended Bang on a Can's summer programme at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. 'I feel grateful to people like Julia who laid the groundwork for me,' says Clyne. 'I'm part of a generation witnessing a big shift in terms of diversity, and I was lucky to have strong role models. When I was younger, I didn't think of myself as a female composer; I was just a composer – that essence has stayed with me.'

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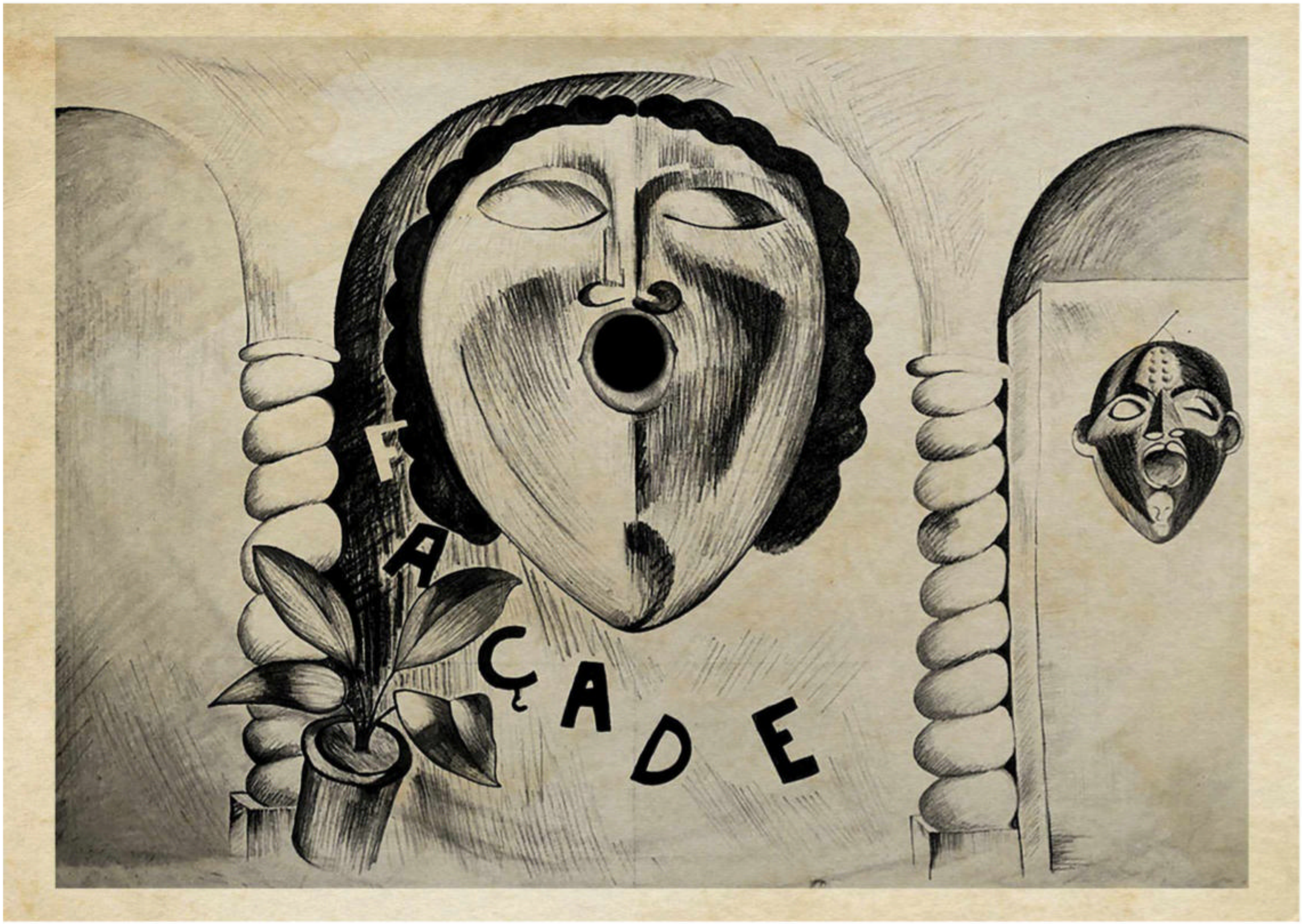


A false start

In 1922, the first public performance of Walton's *Façade* provoked disgust and ridicule. Michael White tells the story of the challenging work's conception

I'm looking through a small, round hole that may be the most celebrated hole in music history. It's in the middle of a canvas cloth, forming the open mouthpiece of a roughly painted face. And it's the hole through which, in 1922, the poet Edith Sitwell thrust a megaphone and entertained a room in Chelsea to the first performance of *Façade*: her collection of arcane verse written to be rhythmically declaimed against a jazzy score by William Walton.

That the cloth survives – in something like pristine condition – is surprising. But then it's been hidden away for decades, with people wondering where it was. The hiding place turned out to be a cupboard in the home of film-maker Tony Palmer, who had been lent the cloth by the Sitwell family for a TV documentary about Walton. 'We used it for an onscreen re-creation of that first *Façade*,' Palmer tells me. 'Then the Sitwells didn't seem to want it back. So, I hung on to it – carefully wrapped in tissue paper.'

Now the cloth is back in business, as part of a Sitwell show put together by the group Art Sung and touring around festivals such as Barnes and Buckingham. After this brief outing, it will doubtless end up behind glass in a museum.

Meanwhile, I can testify that peering through that hole, as Edith once did, is a bizarrely powerful encounter with the past. Here was Edith with a handful of musicians squashed behind the not-so-big cloth in a not-so-massive drawing room packed with bemused guests. Was it chaos? Was it deafening? Did it feel significant?

To start at the beginning of the story, it was a collaboration between young-ish siblings

Partners in crime: (clockwise from main) the *Façade* cloth, complete with megaphone hole; (l-r) Osbert, Edith and Sacheverell Sitwell; artist and sculptor Frank Dobson; Art Sung's Edith Sitwell show; a young William Walton

GETTY

from an aristocratic family – Edith, Osbert and Sacheverell Sitwell – and the still younger composer, William Walton, they had adopted as something between a boy-genius and a pet. Sacheverell had met Walton at Oxford, where the latter had been a Christ Church chorister until his voice broke and he was then shoe-horned into undergraduate life at too early an age, leaving without a degree. Not wanting to go home to his modest origins in Oldham, he accepted an invitation to the Sitwells' London house in Carlyle Square. And Oldham was soon forgotten as he found himself swept into a glittering world.

Chelsea's equivalent to the Bloomsbury Group – with whom they had a mutually suspicious, mostly fractious relationship – the Sitwells saw themselves as heralds of the new in London's cultural life, dividing opinion between those who admired them and those who mocked. According to the critic FR Leavis, they collectively belonged 'to the history of publicity rather than of poetry'. But they had social clout. 'Don't worry about what to become in life,' said photographer Cecil Beaton. 'Become a friend of the Sitwells and wait to see what happens.'

How the words and music came together isn't clear: it was a domestic experiment that proceeded haphazardly

What happened for Walton was the piece that made his name at a tender age – he was 19 at the time of writing it – and supported it ever after. As he would say with only slight exaggeration decades later, 'It keeps me.' And reciprocally, he kept working at it for decades, toying with the content, turning it into orchestral suites and ballets, generally keeping the thing alive as work in progress. By 1942 it settled into a standard version with 21 numbers. But then, as late as 1979, he produced a substantial variant, *Façade 2*, for Peter Pears at the Aldeburgh Festival.

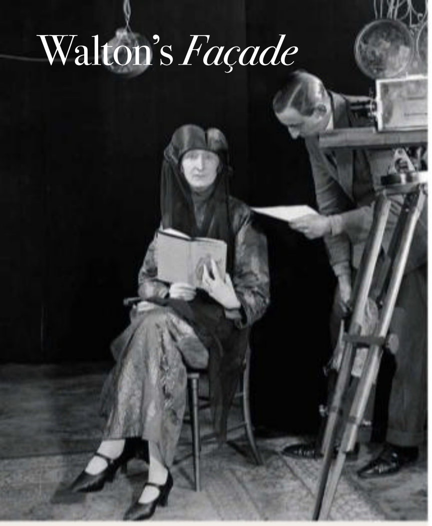
It was a robust outcome for something that, by his own claim, he first threw together and wouldn't have written at all without the competitive neurosis that was always his spur to creativity. 'I remember thinking it was not a very good idea,' he recalled, 'but when I said so, they told me they'd get Constant [Lambert] to do it if I didn't – and of course I couldn't let that occur.'

How the words and music came together isn't clear: it was a domestic experiment that proceeded haphazardly. And though Edith later claimed that the precocious Walton (15 years her junior) would present her with rhythmic structures and say, 'See what you can do with that,' everything seems to have evolved at roughly the same time, with significant input from the Sitwell brothers. The original idea for speaking Edith's verse alongside music was Sacheverell's. And it was Osbert who proposed the cloth screen to shroud the participants in a modernist aesthetic of impersonality.

It was also Osbert who dreamed up the hole, the megaphone (sourced from a man in Hampstead who in fact called it a Sengerphone), and the painted face – for which he recruited the services of the artist Frank Dobson, who had recently been absorbed into the Sitwell circle.

Dobson was principally a sculptor, becoming famous for stylised heads of enigmatically expressionless serenity. In 1921 his bust of Osbert Sitwell, fashioned out of polished brass, created a sensation: TE Lawrence (of Arabia) liked it so much he bought it – subsequently giving it to the Tate Gallery, who then passed it on to the National Portrait Gallery where it still resides.

The head that Dobson painted, loosely, on the canvas for *Façade* looks vaguely African and is perhaps a reference to the old colonial imagery that haunts so much of Edith's texts. In their kaleidoscopic, carnivalesque way, they endlessly refer to 'shady ladies', 'negresses' and 'hottentots': verbal offences these days but arising from an attitude of Empire that celebrated, in its way, the otherness of distant cultures.



A singular voice: Edith Sitwell

Ridiculous to sublime

Edith Sitwell the poet

Edith Sitwell's reputation as a poet has had switchback ups and downs across the years; and wider knowledge of her output tends to depend on the way her words have been immortalised by music.

Façade is the most famous example. But there are other settings by Ned Rorem, Richard Rodney Bennett, Elizabeth Maconchy and Malcolm Williamson. And one more that stands out is Britten's use of her poem 'Still Falls the Rain' as the text for his Canticle III for tenor, horn and piano.

Edith's poem contemplates the horrors of the World War II bombing raids on London, perceiving them in terms of a continuum of suffering that begins with Christ on the Cross. And it speaks in a voice markedly different to that of *Façade*, with a devout religious sensibility that would later see Edith converting to Catholicism.

Britten's 1950s setting honours the text's serious intentions. But his response is also coloured by another factor: that the Canticle was written for a concert in memory of Noel Mewton-Wood, a young pianist of promise who killed himself in despair after the death of his lover. It was a tragedy that touched Britten deeply and feeds into the dark austerity of music worlds away from the outrageous chic of 1920s Chelsea drawing rooms.

GETTY

Fabulous farce: (left) Noël Coward parodied the Sitwells in the 'Swiss Family Whittlebot' sketch that featured in his revue, *London Calling!*

> The truth seems to be that it fell apart in a mixture of giggles and embarrassment

It isn't easy to imagine what the invited audience made of it all – the cloth, the face, the hole, the megaphone, the noise – as they squeezed into the Sitwell drawing room in Carlyle Square for that first performance, 24 January 1922. Walton's score – conceived and orchestrated with an ear to Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale*, Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* and Satie's *Parade* – used only six players, but with instruments designed to penetrate. And it's telling that after the performance, everybody was served hot rum punch: intended, Edith said, as a restorative for 'those who had lost their way in a voyage of discovery'.

Dobson's screen came out again just two weeks later, for a second private performance at a house in Montagu Square. But not until June 1923 did it really come under the spotlight, with *Façade's* first public performance at Aeolian Hall: an event that proved explosive, although on a scale that varies from one eye-witness to another.

The Sitwells – always happy to be persecuted in the cause of art – recorded the event as a tumultuous scandal. 'I was warned to stay… hidden behind the curtain, until they [the hostile public] got tired of waiting for me and went home,' wrote Edith. 'For several weeks we were obliged to go about London feeling as if we had committed a murder,' wrote Osbert. 'When we entered a room there would fall a sudden, unpleasing hush.'

Walton, more laconically, thought it a 'shambles'. And the truth seems to be that it fell apart in a mixture of embarrassment and giggles – which would be unsurprising, given how difficult a piece it is. Some of the texts are near-impossible to speak at speed. The instrumental writing can be virtuoso.

Either way, the press enjoyed a priceless opportunity for disapproval. 'Drivel they paid to hear,' complained the *Daily Graphic*, with advice that it was 'time this sort of thing were stopped'. 'Very depressing, but raises the status of the megaphone,' thought the *Sunday Express*. And adding lustre to a celebrity audience (which included Evelyn Waugh, Lytton Strachey and Virginia Woolf) was Noël Coward, who was moved to write a joyous parody of the whole event in his next revue, *London Calling!*

It featured a Miss Hernia Whittlebot with her brothers Gob and Sago, reciting verse with lines like: 'Your mouth is my mouth/ And our mouth is their mouth/ And their mouth is Bournemouth.' Edith was appalled, not least because she imagined (for no obvious reason) that it depicted her as lesbian. Walton, cool as ever, thought it 'really not unfunny'.

Quite how funny the original *Façade* was meant to be is questionable. Edith made great claims for it as an experiment in rhyme and rhythm, freighted with 'violent exhilaration and veiled melancholy'. And to the extent that meaning can be plucked from the texts' tangled webs of nonsense, there's an undoubted darkness lurking in the images. As one of the poems puts it, 'Something lies behind the scene.' But the salon-chic of Walton's music offers safer space. It may be spikily acerbic, but its cheerful parodies of well-known melodies and dance-forms come with an infectious, upbeat vigour. As *Façade*'s collaborators all agreed, because they authorised the word, it was an 'entertainment'. And Frank Dobson's cloth tells you as much.

It got replaced in 1943 by a more detailed, dreamily romanticised successor – painted by John Piper, who had recently been painting dreamily romantic views of Renishaw, the Sitwells' country house in Derbyshire. But the original by Dobson has a frivolity and raw bravado. It provoked attention back in 1922, and still does. Now the tissue-paper wraps are off.

Released in June 2024 to mark the composer's centenary year, this album of Stanford's Orchestral Songs features a wide selection of colourful and inventive orchestrations he made of his own songs and arrangements of Irish folk melodies for the concert hall.

Featuring the BBC Concert Orchestra, conductor John Andrews leads the ensemble and soloists Sharon Carty and Morgan Pearse in this idiom with which Stanford felt a special affinity.

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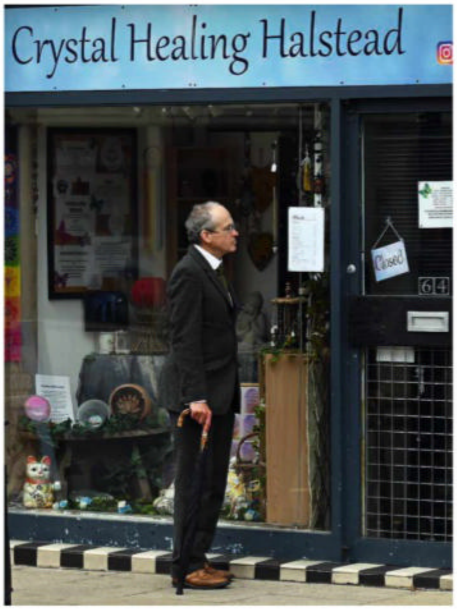
A path to… The Planets

Rick Jones dons Gustav Holst's Edwardian suit and round spectacles to re-create a walk from Colchester to Thaxted in 1913 – as an astrological work formed in his mind

PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN MILLAR

It is December 1913 and in the bleak midwinter ('In the BMW!' choristers will quip), I set off on a solitary walk through Essex to clear my head after a tough term of teaching. The students at James Allen's Girls' School (JAGS) enjoy the carol I wrote to Christina Rossetti's words for my friend Vaughan Williams's *New English Hymnal* a decade ago, and it is one of the most popular in the book – although Harold Darke's version, which is based on mine, pips it. Success at JAGS brought me a second post at the newly opened St Paul's, a young ladies' equivalent of the centuries-old cathedral school. I composed my *St Paul's Suite* for the girls' orchestra and felt like Vivaldi writing for the orphanage. The governors were so impressed they built me a soundproofed room.

I take the train to Roman Colchester and set off in a north-westerly direction. I have



Strutting his stuff: (clockwise from main) Gustav Holst, aka Rick Jones, 'improvises a merry dance of delight'; starting a 'leaden plod'; sampling the 'Halstead vibes', but the shop is shut; poppies and 'a lovely pond' at the village of Wethersfield

some reading matter in William Lilly's *An Introduction to Astrology*, my hobby, and an orchestral suite comes to me based on the moods governed by the heavenly bodies. Lilly was a 17th-century seer who predicted the Fire of London. The planet Mars, the Bringer of War, invokes aggression, confrontation and energy and inspires in me a threateningly urgent five-four march with ominous bow-tapping at the start. Next year war happens. I predicted it. Millions 'fell'. Colchester will erect an elaborate memorial with a St George in ornate chivalric armour impaling a dragon on his mighty double-handed sword. There are raindrops on my spectacles.

December was the Saturnalia for the Romans, who built Colchester, and their partying turned into Christmas. The after-effects are melancholy and gloom, moods which astrologers attribute to Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age, which now hobbles with me along the A1124. Bent against the cold, I button my jacket and settle into rocking-chair syncopations against a leaden plod – so, fa, mi, do - in the bass. Pensioners have their own road sign beneath the railway viaduct at Chappel. Saturn brings me no old age, alas, and I will die at 59 in a hospital bed.

At Halstead there are good vibes in the high street. The blue planet Neptune, the Mystic, rules here with its mind-over-matter concept of spiritual healing, the power of collective consciousness and the soothing potential to cure neuroses. My stepmother was into all that and it rubbed off on me as an impressionable teenager. In the astrology shop next to the zodiac charts and laughing Buddha, I hear wind chimes and conceive them as a tinkling celesta and aeolian flutes in my Neptune finale, resuming the five-four metre but now with an eerie, ethereal, wordless and invisible choir of sopranos, and no longer the uneven, threatening stomp of Mars. Shame the shop is closed. Should've predicted that. The girls' voices are all that's left at the end. Repeat till fade. I'm sure I'm the first composer to write this instruction. They disappear into infinity, like me.

I leave the main road and head west to Wethersfield, a quiet village with a 12th-century church and a lovely pond. Venus, the Bringer of Peace, swings into my consciousness on a serene melody with caressing seesaw chords. There are poppies growing – symbols of peace. I enter the graveyard – what my distant German ancestors called a Friedhof or peaceyard. One of them added 'Von' to the family name without justification and it attracts suspicion in the war, so I drop it. People still think I'm a German, but I was born in Cheltenham! I'm not the first to undergo a name change. Irishman Patrick Prunty was curate at Wethersfield and changed his name to Brontë, before he produced three daughters in another parish.

I stop for refreshment at Great Bardfield which will become a colony of painters dedicated to figurative art, leaving trendy abstraction to others in Cornwall. Bawden, Ravilious and Aldridge lead the Essex community and two of them will have plaques. The comparison in music is between the avant-garde atonalists, like

On top of the world: Holst guffaws with pleasure at Thaxted's St John the Baptist; (below left) at his house, The Steps; (below right) Holst takes his place at the organ

my contemporary Schoenberg, and the traditional tonalists like me. Schoenberg wrote Five Pieces for Orchestra and, emulating him, I wrote seven which became *The Planets*. His clever keyless work has never been popular, but mine was an immediate hit and has never left the repertoire. Mind you, almost nothing else of mine is played. I don't wish to sound ungrateful, but I have written other stuff.

And then I come to Thaxted and can't believe my luck. I arrive at the bottom of a broad market street with a 15th-century guildhall where the road divides and winds steeply up to a magnificent gothic church with a spire. St John the Baptist admits slanting shafts of sunlight through wide, stained-glass windows onto soft, pale mediaeval stone. I'm not religious but I sing an amen to hear the acoustic and the long echo weaves around the columns. I guffaw with pleasure and the building laughs back in agreement.

Outside, ancient, thatched, timber-frame Tudor cottages have been added to with 'modern' Georgian mansions and along a meandering lane there is a mighty windmill standing ignorant of industrial methods. Of country towns, Thaxted surely is the chief, the number

one, the Jupiter, Bringer of Jollity, and I improvise a merry dance of delight in the neighbouring wheatfield. I hear horns syncopate Falstaffian laughter against tickling staccato strings and a heavy waltz stepped out by peasants in clogs. I set Falstaff's speeches in my opera *At the Boar's Head*, which the irreverent Covent Garden chorus dubs 'In the Whore's Bed'. Shakespeare's tavern is in Cheapside, London, but there's a Boars Head pub in Dunmow, too, where I break my journey.

I am so enamoured of this East Anglian idyll that I make it my home for a decade.

I fetch my wife Isobel and six-year-old daughter Imogen and we move into a cottage a mile down the Dunmow road at Monk Street from where I can see the steeple and mill across the fields. There I commit my *Planets* suite to manuscript. In time a Georgian house, The Steps (because it has a flight up to the front door) in the centre of Thaxted, becomes available and I install my Collard & Collard grand piano in the front room. After I'm gone,

JOHN MILLAR

Then and now: (above) recreating an image of Holst with his musicians from 1917; (left) 'the Winged Messenger' from Stansted

Imogen will transport, at some expense, the instrument, my astrology books and other effects to my birthplace museum at Cheltenham which she decorates with wallpaper designed by William Morris, founder of the Arts and Crafts movement, because I conducted his Hammersmith Socialist Choir in the 1890s.

In Thaxted I swing into the orbit of the vicar Reverend Conrad Noel, a communist who is keen to revive mediaeval folk practices into staid old Church of England services. I become his organist. We have Morris men gambolling in the aisles and I compose a catchy tune for the ancient carol *Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day* which many listeners think is traditional. I have the knack of writing music which sounds as if it has been around forever. Jupiter, after the jollity subsides, produces a majestic theme which immediately becomes a classic. I give it the name 'Thaxted'. People hum it in the streets and

Of country towns, Thaxted surely is the chief, the Jupiter, Bringer of Jollity

Sir Cecil Spring Rice, British ambassador to the US, pens a patriotic poem – 'I Vow to Thee, My Country' – which I adapt its tune to fit. The stirring lyric is said to have encouraged the Americans to join the fray. Not everyone agrees this is appropriate, but I am only a musician.

To cheer everyone up during the war, I suggest a party to the Rev. Noel and in 1917, the first Thaxted Festival takes place. I bring a bevy of sopranos and altos from St Paul's, plus male voices from my adult choir at Morley College, another teaching post. We sing masses in the church and madrigals in the rainy fields, and the event is such a success that it continues more than 100 years later, albeit with a few intermissions along the way. In 2024, an organist from Westminster Abbey will play 'my' instrument and students from London will sing my *Choral Symphony*, a setting of Keats' 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' with its magical shrinking of time.

Time catches up with Thaxted when an airport arrives at the unsuspecting neighbouring village of Stansted and Mercury, the Winged Messenger, becomes a constant presence in the blue. I realise his quicksilver temperament in jet-propelled jig time, rich with hemiolas, landing with a pizzicato bump on the tarmac. 21st-century residents of Thaxted become used to his mercurial fizz and see beauty in his steely silhouette.

I am planning a second choral symphony when I die in 1934. I am buried in Chichester Cathedral whose bishop, George Bell, becomes a friend and takes on my festival idea at Whitsun. He also likes to dance in the aisle. My music lives on. Thaxted draws so many people to my event that the constabulary puts out wizard hats to control the vehicles. Uranus, the Magician, hoves into view and I think of Dukas's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, which inspires my opening. The planet was discovered by a musician, Herschel, in 1781. Astrologers associate it with genius, originality and invention. Don't you think the cone matches the Thaxted spire?

Thaxted Festival runs from 21 June to 14 July 2024: thaxtedfestival.co.uk. Rick Jones walked to Thaxted via Earls Colne, Halstead, Sible Hedingham, Finchingfield, Great Bardfield and Great Dunmow.

The best of times

As the Kronos Quartet reaches its 50th year, leader David Harrington speaks to Simon Broughton about transforming the quartet model and repertoire

I'm at a soundcheck for the Kronos Quartet in the recently re-opened Beacon Hall in Bristol. The quartet aren't actually playing their instruments, but tapping water bottles with soft xylophone sticks. Leader David Harrington has a black bottle, cellist Paul Wiancko a pink one, viola player Hank Dutt a blue one and whatever second violinist John Sherba is hitting I can't see because it's hidden by his iPad. It's about getting the bottles at the right angles and hitting them in the most sonorous place. The piece is called 'Water', by Seattle-based composer and climate-change activist Gabriella Smith. It's a movement from *Keep Going*, written for the Kronos's 50th anniversary, and begins with a recording of trickling water followed by the tapping water bottles, the sound of rice inside a violin and the rattling of seeds in packets.

Kronos's Bristol concert includes music by composers from the US, Iceland, Benin and Serbia, and traditional music from Iran. Needless to say, it's like no other string quartet concert and references different styles and genres of music from all over the world. But that's how the Kronos have revolutionised what we think of as a string quartet. They've commissioned over 1,100 pieces and sold over 4 million recordings.

In their 50th anniversary year, Kronos have been giving concerts all around the world, picking out particular repertoire for appropriate places. In New York their onstage guests included American vocalist Laurie Anderson, bluegrass fiddler Jake Blount and Inuit singer Tanya Tagaq. In London there was the glorious Javanese singer Peni Candra Rini and *djembé* drum player Yahael Camara Onono. Their concerts bring together three ingredients: a musical activism in support of human rights and climate action; an omnivorous curiosity for music from all over the world; and a long-standing dedication to American minimalist composers like Terry Riley, Philip Glass and Steve Reich.

Harrington took up the violin aged nine. When he started playing quartets in his early teens in Seattle, he was puzzled that all the music came from in and around Vienna – essentially by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert. 'Even back then I found myself thinking there's something missing here,' he remembers.

> Kronos concerts bring together activism and a curiosity about music from all over the world

It was hearing *Black Angels* for electrified string quartet by George Crumb, broadcast on the radio in 1973, that made Harrington decide he wanted to form a quartet. 'I knew I had to start a group in order to play that piece,' he says.

Black Angels was composed in reaction to the Vietnam War. 'Things were turned upside down. There were terrifying things in the air… they found their way into *Black Angels*,' said Crumb. The music is full of screaming, terrifying sounds that could be shattering shells, shattering lives or the shattering status quo – as well as beautiful sonorous sounds with water-filled glasses.

Harrington now realises Seattle was quite an alternative place and a centre of protest, although at the time he was just busy playing the violin. 'I'd

LENNY GONZALES, GETTY

Now and then: current Kronos members (l-r) Hank Dutt, David Harrington, Paul Wiancko and John Sherba; (right) the 1990 line-up, with cellist Joan Jeanrenaud

see the freeway closed down and thousands of people demonstrating, or things going on at the University of Washington, where I was studying. I began to sense that something was happening.'

Looking back over the Kronos's output you might think – with a few exceptions – they'd made a decision to work only with living composers, though that's not the case. They just enjoy working with them. 'It's so much fun to have the composer think about each one of us in the way we play and in the way the group plays,' Harrington says, 'and then to learn so much from not only what the composer says, but how they say it and maybe how they sing their music. Terry Riley is a great example. To have Terry sing his music, to gesture and to make comments is a thrill and the best way to learn the music.'

Seeing the many cables, volume controls for earpieces and bits of kit on the floor makes you realise that a Kronos concert is both a technical and musical challenge. Harrington explains that when they started touring Steve Reich's *Different Trains* in 1989, they began travelling with a sound engineer: 'We've been a quintet since then!' Reich used recordings of his governess, an American railway porter, Jewish survivors of the Holocaust and of actual rolling stock, and worked them together into an extraordinary multi-layered piece – with much of the music coming from the speech melodies of the interviewees. *Different Trains* is a very powerful work and one of the landmark Kronos commissions to have entered the repertoire. Four out of the ten pieces performed in Bristol involve recordings and the quartet have also added a lighting designer to their line-up in recent years.

One of their frequent musical collaborators has been Chinese *pipa* player Wu Man. She's a leading player of the plucked lute and works both in China and the US, where she is now based. 'Most violinists will talk about the first time they heard Heifetz because of his searing ability and command of the instrument,' says ▶

Singing from the soul: Rim Banna

No stone unturned
Kronos Festival 2024

The Kronos Festival takes place at the San Francisco Jazz Center in June. It includes (on 21 June) the premiere of Jonathan Berger's *Hajar Yassini* (Stone of Yassin). David Harrington and Berger discussed for some time a piece bringing Israeli and Palestinian musicians together, but after the 7 October Hamas attack and the Gaza war, that became impossible. Yet Kronos are always keen to reflect what's going on in the world. So, this piece is a lament for a Palestinian village destroyed shortly before the creation of Israel in 1948. It was also the site of a quarry for the beautiful Jerusalem stone from which the city is built. It features the Kronos plus a lovely recording of the late Palestinian singer Rim Banna, a poem (in English) by Nathalie Khankan read by the author, and visuals of a quarry by Israeli artist Penny Hes Yassour. 'It's about facing up to uncomfortable truths,' says Berger. 'I don't hold any illusions that my music is going to change the world, but this story must not be forgotten.'
Kronos Festival 2024 takes place 20-23 June: kronosquartet.org

GETTY, MARK ALLAN

Glorious collaborations: Kronos with Indonesian performer Peni Candra Rini at Barbican, London; (below) Chinese *pipa* player Wu Man

Harrington. 'I had the same feeling when I first heard Wu Man playing *pipa*. There was such a command of the instrument and its colours. I immediately knew I wanted to work with her.' Their most substantial collaboration is *Ghost Opera*, commissioned from Tan Dun in 1994. Written for string quartet and *pipa*, it also includes water bowls, gongs, cymbals, stones and paper, plus vocals, and ritual and theatrical elements.

The Kronos have been based in San Francisco since 1978 – and it's where the Kronos Performing Arts Association, their non-profit organisation, is based. Their major achievement in recent years has been commissioning *50 for the Future* – 50 new string quartet pieces from composers all over the world, half of them women and half men. According to their website, the aim is 'to guide young string quartets in developing and honing the skills required for the performance of 21st-century repertoire'.

The individual parts, recordings and extra instrumental tracks can be downloaded for free from the *50 for the Future* website. Composers range from big names like Philip Glass, Terry Riley and Laurie Anderson, via world music stars like Zakir Hussain from India and Angélique Kidjo from Benin, to intriguing figures like *balafon* player Fodé Lassana Diabaté from Mali or Joan Jeanrenaud, who was cellist with the Kronos from 1978-99. It's a challenging body of work in hugely diverse styles.

'We're now benefiting from some of the work that we've been doing all these years. Younger players really can navigate music like this and it's very thrilling,' Harrington says. Kronos are 'among a small number of groups that have set the terms for new "classical" music over the last 50 years,' says Richard Jones, viola player in Britain's Ligeti Quartet. 'They present all music, regardless of where it come from and when, as equally fascinating and essential. They encouraged us to stick to our guns and trust our instincts when it came to the music we choose to play. It's probably the single piece of advice that has had an impact on our identity as a group, and probably the reason we are still going strong.'

The Ligeti Quartet spent a week with Kronos at Carnegie Hall in 2015 to launch the *50 for the Future* series, and now include several of those pieces in their repertoire. There were performances of all 50 works in Amsterdam last year (by Kronos and nine other quartets) and at the Philharmonie de Paris this year (by six different quartets). And most of the pieces were performed at last year's Kronos Festival in San Francisco. The *50 for the Future* materials have been downloaded more than 30,000 times by visitors from over 100 countries.

In March, Kronos made the dramatic announcement that John Sherba (second violin) and Hank Dutt (viola), who've been with the quartet 46 and 47 years respectively, will be retiring after this year's Kronos Festival in June. They will be replaced by violinist Gabriela Diáz and violist Ayane Kozasa. Harrington says: 'This next chapter will be full of big adventures – stay tuned.'

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MUSICAL DESTINATIONS

Verbier Switzerland

From breathtaking mountain scenery to the world's best musicians, this upmarket Swiss resort has it all, as *Michael Church* discovers

The hills are alive: Verbier is set among stunning alpine slopes

SEDRIK NEMETH, NICOLAS BRODARD, GETTY

My path follows a flower-fringed stream on the slopes of a high mountain peak overlooking Verbier. This is May, snow-capped Mont Blanc is shimmering in the distance, and the only things that break the silence apart from rushing water are the scrunch of tyres as the occasional mountain-biker hurtles downhill, and the faint whirr of a hang-glider as it whispers past overhead. Plus, the sound of nature's perennial gamelan: an orchestra of cowbells.

A hundred years ago, this region of the Francophone high Alps would have echoed with cowbells, and with almost nothing else. It was intrepid British skiers who in the 1930s first popularised the chaste beauty of Verbier. Once a little village of herders, it is now a Mecca for winter sports, and its slopes are discreetly studded with the chalets of the super-rich. Its other claim to fame is as host to the most glittering music festival in the world.

The only begetter of this event likes living dangerously. Martin T:son Engstroem's initial idea was simply to combine intensive partying and state-of-the-art chamber music performances on top of a mountain, but being artistic boss of Deutsche Grammophon meant he had a stunning roster of talent to call on. Thus it was that Martha Argerich and her Russian friends – Mischa Maisky and his children, Nikolai Lugansky, Gidon Kremer, Vadim Repin, Maxim Vengerov and Evgeny Kissin – came to form the artistic nucleus for a dazzling annual festival.

A plenitude of pianists: Yuja Wang is one of many keyboard stars who regularly appear at Verbier

Pipes of history
Basilique de Valère

On a rocky crag overlooking the valley linking Francophone Sion and German-speaking Sierre is the 11th-century Basilique de Valère (above), which houses one of the world's oldest pipe organs. It was built in 1435, and its pipes are arranged to form a rough outline of a church, the larger ones suggesting two towers, and the smaller ones a triangular roof. It was modified in the 18th century to play Baroque music, but it's otherwise essentially unchanged, and each year it acts as the focus of an organ festival. Moreover, the hill on which it stands is itself noteworthy, hosting protected species of flora and fauna.

'I'm always looking for another name for it,' says Engstroem, 'because that word is so misused. I'd like to find a word which implies a happening, an atmosphere. Something that implies the pilgrimage you have to make to get here, because it's not a through-town. It's at the end of the road, and it takes a big effort to get here. But once you arrive, you are in a different world.'

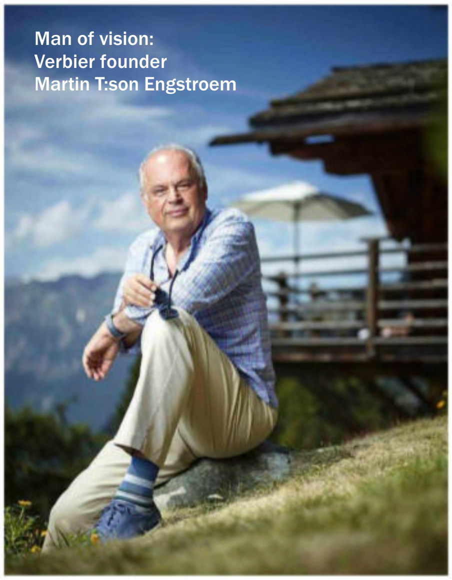
Engstroem induced his stars to take artistic risks, using Verbier as a laboratory rather than as a mere showcase. He created a youth orchestra drawn from every corner of the globe and decreed that masterclasses should take place in venues around town from dawn till dusk, and that these should be open to all, free of charge. He invited jazz groups to serenade the public in the central square each afternoon; he established an amateur week; he created a link with Medici Arts so that the main events could be streamed live on the internet. Things took a dip during the pandemic, but now they're splendidly back on track.

If the mountain walks around Verbier are a dream, the territory in the valleys below is fascinating. Building styles in the villages haven't changed in centuries, as the foundation-dates intricately carved into old tufa doorways and wooden crossbeams attest. Meanwhile, the architecture of Sion, Switzerland's oldest city, reflects the passing of empires. From the Celts to the Romans to the Savoyards to Napoleon, every force which has occupied this magnificent walled city has left its mark. There are plenty of museums, but you scarcely need them, so intensely does history surround you.

One person I run into at the Verbier Festival is cookery guru Prue Leith. She

> 'It takes an effort to get here, but once you arrive, you are in a different world'

came for the music, but has been bowled over by the quality of the local cuisine, with its rough sourdough bread, delicious cheeses, and its excellent Gamay which has none of the acidity of its French counterpart. 'I eat far too much posh-chef food,' she says, 'and this place is a delight. They're not trying to reinvent the wheel, they're just trying to do things well.' The cosy L'Ecurie restaurant is a case in point, but if you want to see how fanciful Verbier's high-end chefs can be – and if you can afford it – try L'enclos de Valère.



Man of vision: Verbier founder Martin T:son Engstroem

The musical menu in 2024 is just as mouth-watering. Yunchan Lim and Alexandre Kantorow are among the new stars making an appearance, but the established ones are there in force, including Simon Rattle and Magdalena Kožená, Thomas Quasthoff, Evgeny Kissin, Kirill Gerstein, Yuja Wang and Leonidas Kavakos. And in addition to all that, the masterclasses – covering both voices and instruments – are dependably fascinating. What's not to like?

Further info: Verbier Festival runs from 18 July to 4 August 2024; **verbierfestival.com/en/**

BBC RADIO 3 **Composer of the Week** is broadcast on Radio 3 at 4pm, Monday to Friday. Programmes in June are:
3-7 June Amanda Röntgen-Maier and her circle
10-14 June Gibbons
17-21 June Dvořák
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Isaac Albéniz

Though best known for depicting the colours of his homeland, the Spaniard was in fact a truly cosmopolitan figure, says *Jessica Duchen*

ILLUSTRATION: MATT HERRING

Albéniz's style

Spanish dances Albéniz's music often pulsates with the infectious rhythms of the jota or the habanera; but he does not often appropriate folk music intact, instead adopting its characteristic elements to inform original work. The harmonies are full of deliciously harsh clashes, the melodies twinkle with decorative twists and the textures are busy with street life, guitar strumming and the stamp of dancing feet.

Virtuosity His astonishing pianistic abilities enabled him to realise his richest and most atmospheric ideas on the instrument. His piano music, *Ibéria* in particular, is extremely challenging to perform, written with many-layered voicing full of inner busyness and garlanded with scintillating effects.

Sweet tooth à la français Even if opera was not Albéniz's natural habitat, his embrace of French romantic sentiment derived from Massenet (above) and Gounod, his unfailing lyricism and his refulgent orchestration give his opera *Pepita Jiménez* considerable appeal.

Impressionism and introspection In Paris, he soaked up the language of Debussy, Fauré, Chausson, Dukas and their colleagues: his late works – his 'second manner' – were pervaded by the Symbolist introspection so audible in *Merlin*. A supposedly depressive tendency is sometimes attributed to his years of suffering from nephritis and its psychological effect.

GETTY

Perhaps the story of Isaac Albéniz is not the most colourful, unlikely or fascinating of any composer's life. But it can't be far off, especially as accounts of it have often been liberally peppered with self-created disinformation. Paul Dukas once termed him 'a Don Quixote with the manner of Sancho Panza' and his biographer, Walter Aaron Clark, found discrepancies in information that showed he was a deeply unreliable narrator of his own existence. For instance, his account of studying with Liszt in Budapest turned out to be pure fantasy. The genuine side of Albéniz's irrepressible spirit, however, lives on in his great-hearted music.

Along with his compatriots Enrique Granados and Manuel de Falla, Albéniz's importance is bound up with the musical nationalism of the late-19th and early-20th centuries: his work is inextricably connected to his native Spain, its traditional music and its folklore. In person, though, he was thoroughly cosmopolitan, resident mainly in Paris, but influenced – indeed facilitated – by his association with London.

He is best known for his piano works, in particular the vertigo-inducing heights of the cycle *Ibéria*, one of the most technically challenging creations in the repertoire. Once, he nearly destroyed its manuscript for fear that it was impossible to play. Yet this magnificent work might never have existed were it not for Albéniz's London patron, Francis Money-Coutts, Fifth Baron Latymer, who guaranteed him a pension for life in return for setting his libretti to music. So bizarre has the friendship of Spanish musician and English lord seemed to commentators that its crucial role has rarely gained enough credit. Not least, three complete operas resulted which, even if not quite Mozartian perfection, cast important light on Albéniz's creative life.

Enough myths and mysteries surrounded Albéniz even before that. What is certain, however, is that he was born on 29 May 1860 in the small Catalonian town of Camprodón, Lérida, close to the French border. His father, Ángel, was a customs officer, a sometime would-be local politician and a passionate Freemason. Isaac was a child prodigy: he made his first concert appearance aged four at Barcelona's Teatro Romea. When he was seven, his mother took him to play to Antoine Marmontel at the Paris Conservatoire, but the lad was thought too young for the institution... or so the story went. Another version suggests that Dolores Albéniz took two of her daughters to study in Paris, but Isaac and his other sister, Clementina, stayed at home with their father. Clementina's account says that Isaac could not read music until he was six or seven, but played purely by ear.

Albéniz studied in Madrid with José Mendizábal and composed his first piece in 1869: a *Marcha militar* for piano. Legend says that he ran away from home, aged 11, on a railway escapade through Spain; but he was probably on a concert tour with

> **Albéniz nearly destroyed *Ibéria*'s manuscript for fear that the piece was impossible to play**

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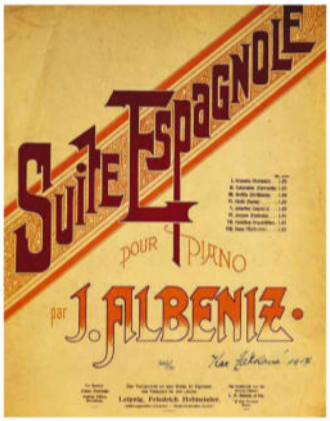

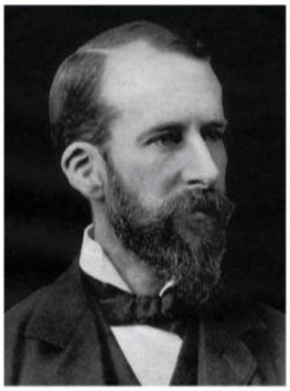

Smoking talent: (clockwise from right) the score for the *Suite Espagnole*; Albéniz was himself a formidable pianist; his patron Francis Money-Coutts, Fifth Baron Latymer, was a devoted friend

his father. Stories about him stowing away on a ship to America also turn out (rather disappointingly) to have little basis: Ángel was appointed as an inspector-general in Havana, Cuba, in 1875, which is why his son went to the Caribbean and performed there. A couple of months at the Leipzig Conservatory followed the next year; after the money ran out, which it rapidly did, he won a scholarship to study in Brussels.

During the 1880s and '90s, he composed a string of solo piano works that resemble Spanish travelogues: works such as *Suite española*, *Recuerdos de viaje* and *Cantos de España*, in which he employed the edgy rhythms and characteristic melodic twists of Spanish traditional music to evoke atmospheres, landscapes and cityscapes, especially those of Andalucia. Ironically, however, Spanish politics disenchanted him so much that he preferred to live elsewhere. From abroad, he preserved in his music a personal, idealised version of his homeland – rather like Chopin with Poland or Liszt with Hungary.

He moved to London in 1890; he had made his name there through a concert tour the previous year, during which he signed a contract with Henry Lowenfeld (an impresario of sorts), placing his work as composer and pianist under Lowenfeld's control. This enabled his family to take up residence in 'una casa magnifíca' in the Brompton area. During these years he reached the peak of his powers as a pianist.

He also tried writing English operetta in *The Magic Opal*, of which George Bernard Shaw commented: 'His music is pretty, shapely, unstinted, lively, goodnatured, and far too romantic and refined for the stuff which Mr Arthur Law [the librettist] has given him to set.' Though well received, the stage production foundered on financial problems, which a cut-down version, *The Magic Ring*, did not solve. After three years the Lowenfeld contract was revised, a third person entering the agreement: Money-Coutts.

In 1894, without losing his patron's support, Albéniz relocated: first briefly to Barcelona, then to Paris, as his wife, Rosina, preferred that city. This move transformed the nature of his music. He became close friends with Fauré and Chausson, and was substantially influenced by Debussy. He took some lessons, too, with d'Indy and Dukas, the latter notably spicing up his orchestration. The impact of French 'Impressionism' substantially extended his technical and imaginative range, feeding into *Ibéria*'s 12 pieces and helping to make that cycle into what Messiaen once called 'the masterpiece of Spanish music'.

GETTY

'His music is pretty, shapely, unstinted, lively, goodnatured, and far too romantic'

But how does an impossibly talented Spanish pianist land up setting Arthurian opera libretti by an English aristocratic poet? Was it simply for the money? For years, the relationship of Albéniz and Money-Coutts was portrayed as a kind of Faustian pact – unfair, and inaccurate. Money-Coutts's patronage enabled Albéniz to support his family while also writing the music he longed to write; it also made possible his move to Paris. He would otherwise have been obliged to devote more time to performing and teaching to earn a crust, and his compositions would have been the casualty. Besides, Money-Coutts was anything but a Mephistopheles. Yes, he had inherited wealth, but he was also deeply cultured: a lawyer, a prolific author, the editor of numerous poetry books, and as a poet more than just a Great British Amateur.

There was still more to it, however. According to their descendants, their families have long suspected that composer and librettist were possibly lovers and that their work together sprang from a deep personal attachment. That impression is borne out by some very touching poems that Money-Coutts wrote in memory of Albéniz after his death.

Their joint operas, which began with *Henry Clifford*, have largely languished in obscurity. Set during the Wars of the Roses, *Henry Clifford* was premiered in 1895 in Barcelona but, while generally well received, suffered from indifferent performers, a too-brief run late in the opera season and a general prejudice that a pianist could not be capable of writing a strong opera. It vanished for over a century, until reconstructed and recorded in 2002.

More recognition has attended *Pepita Jiménez* – perhaps because it most readily meets widespread preconceptions about Albéniz's Spanish style. Based on a novel by Juan Valera, it tells of a wealthy young widow and her love for a man who intends to become a monk. It had a difficult genesis: after the 1896 premiere

ALBÉNIZ Life & Times

1860

LIFE: Isaac Manuel Francisco Albéniz y Pascual is born on 29 May in Camprodón, Spain. Emerging from an early age, his musical talent is encouraged by his father, a customs officer.

TIMES: Spain defeats Morocco at the ***Battle of Tétouan*** (left) in north Africa. The victory secures the cities of Ceuta and Melilla against further Moroccan attacks.

1876

LIFE: Having toured widely in Europe and America as a pianist, he studies in Leipzig and Brussels, thanks to a royal grant obtained by Alfonso XII's private secretary ***Guillermo Morphy*** (above).

TIMES: Following the overthrow of the First Spanish Republic and restoration of the monarchy in December 1874, the Spanish Constitution of 1876 is brought into effect on 30 June.

1892

LIFE: The first three of his *Chants d'espagne* for piano are premiered in Paris. The opening Prélude later becomes famous as *Asturias (Leyenda)* in the transcription for guitar by ***Francisco Tárrega*** (above) .

TIMES: Following his research into disease in tobacco plants, botanist Dmitri Ivanovsky concludes it is due to an unidentified miniscule infectious agent, later given the name 'virus'.

GETTY, ARCHIVIO STORICO RICORDI

1883

LIFE: He marries his piano student Rosina Jordana. They go on to have five children, one of whom, ***Alfonso*** (left), will become the first footballer to play for both FC Barcelona and Real Madrid.

TIMES: Eduard Manet, painter of masterpieces including *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* and *Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère*, dies in Paris aged 51, eleven days after having his left foot amputated.

1905

LIFE: He begins the composition of *Ibéria*, his 12-movement suite for piano. It is divided into four three-piece books, which are premiered in turn in each of the following four years.

TIMES: ***Debussy***'s (below) *La mer* fails to create waves at its premiere in Paris. 'I do not hear, I do not see, I do not smell the sea', reports Pierre Lalo, the disappointed critic from *Le Temps*.

1909

LIFE: At only 48 years old, he dies of Bright's Disease in Cambo-les-Bains, France, shortly after receiving the country's Légion d'honneur. He is buried in Montjuïc Cemetery, Barcelona.

TIMES: In late July, 'Tragic Week' sees violent clashes between Spanish police and citizens in Barcelona, triggered by the call up of reserve forces to fight in northern Morocco.

Albéniz revised it substantially, and the third version in 1905 proved the most successful. Other composers tinkered with it after his death, and not to its advantage; one changed the ending, making this tuneful, good-natured piece into a tragedy.

Money-Coutts's dream, however, was to create a trilogy based on Arthurian legend: *Merlin, Lancelot* and *Guinevere*. *Merlin* alone was completed before Albéniz died (he did not live long enough even to begin on *Guinevere*); and the only part he heard performed was the prelude, a shadowy soundscape steeped in Wagnerism, especially *Parsifal* – which might not otherwise be credited as a major Albéniz influence, but is frankly unmistakable.

The opera shows a side of its composer of which we would otherwise know too little. It was not staged with orchestra until 1950, and a modern revival in 2003 was seemingly a one-off, but it has been recorded by an all-star cast including Carlos Álvarez and Plácido Domingo. Albéniz also wrote some piano music based on poems by Money-Coutts: he intended to produce a suite entitled *The Alhambra*, of which the soulful piece 'La vega' is a survivor.

But it is in *Ibéria*, composed between 1905 and '08, that the various elements of Spanish character, pianistic virtuosity and the impact of Impressionism arrive in ideal balance. Here Albéniz, as he wrote (reliably, for once), had taken '*españolismo* and technical difficulty to the ultimate extreme'. The 12 pieces – four books of three each – do not have to be played together or in order, so perhaps it is no wonder if pianists home in on the Flamenco-laden numbers such as 'Triana' and 'El Albaicín'. Yet it is in the darker, gentler, almost visionary pieces, including 'Evocación' and 'Almería', that perhaps Albéniz is revealing his inner self: his rooted anguish, his deep, warm tenderness and his generous soul.

His premature death in 1909 from Bright's Disease (an intensely painful kidney inflammation) left the musical world mourning a bright-burning, inimitable star.

Jessica Duchen would like to thank Crispin Money-Coutts, Ninth Baron Latymer, and Alfonso Alzamora for their help with research for this article.

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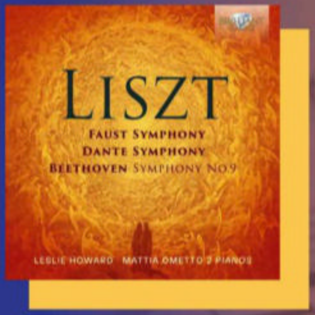

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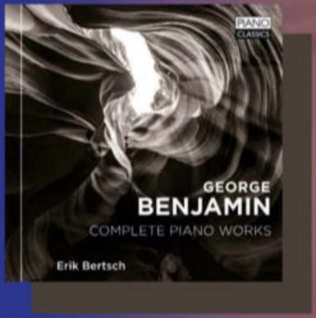

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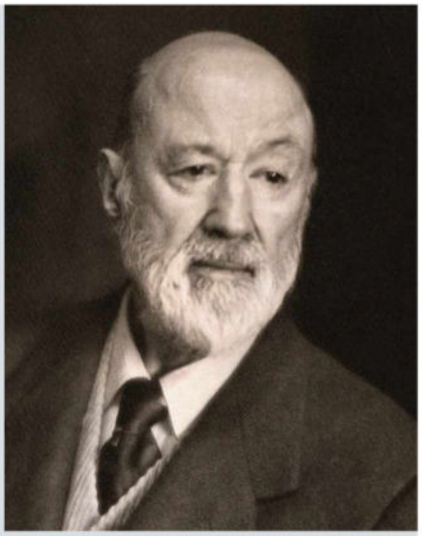
Charles Ives

Three Places in New England

Terry Blain looks for a picture-perfect performance as he takes in the best recordings of Ives's vivid orchestral snapshots from his home patch



The composer

Blessed with multiple talents, the Connecticut-born Charles Ives played American football for Yale before going on to become a respected expert on life insurance as the co-founder of the company Ives and co. On top of that, he found time to be the most forward-looking American composer of his era, honing skills he had learnt from his father George, a US army bandleader. Though much of his music went relatively unnoticed during his lifetime, the likes of *Central Park in the Dark*, *The Unanswered Question* and Symphony No. 4 became widely recognised as masterpieces after his death, aged 79, in 1954.

Building a Library is broadcast on Radio 3 at 3.30pm each Saturday as part of *Record Review*. A highlights podcast is available on BBC Sounds.

The work

'Poly-tonality, atonality, tone clusters, tone rows, multiple orchestras... He quietly set about devouring the contemporary cake before the rest of us even found a seat at the same table.' The speaker in this 1966 interview was none other than Igor Stravinsky, his subject the extraordinarily prescient music of Charles Ives. The American composer was, Stravinsky asserted, ahead of his time, 'exploring the 1960s during the heyday of Richard Strauss and Debussy'.

Or was he? Even today, there are those who view Ives as little more than a gifted amateur, despite an extensive musical training with his father and at Yale University. How could this 'spare-time' composer – who worked in insurance for a living and gleefully threw all manner of dissonance, scraps of popular songs and weird key clashes into his music – possibly be taken seriously?

Even a cursory listen to the headily atmospheric *Three Places in New England* puts paid to that line of argument. An 'Orchestral Set' of three pieces completed in 1914 when Ives turned 40, the work is rich in evocative sound-memories of the US, reflecting both Ives's own personal experiences and the turbulent history of his native country.

The dark side of America's past is examined in *Three Places*'s opening movement, 'The "St. Gaudens" in Boston Common (Col. Shaw and his Colored Regiment)'. In it, Ives contemplates the bronze bas-relief sculpture in Boston Common, honouring an all-Black regiment which fought for the Union in the American Civil War.

Above a solemn march rhythm defined by timpani and bass instruments, the composer strews a patchwork of quotations from patriotic tunes such as 'Marching Through Georgia' and 'The Battle Cry of Freedom.' But the mood is far from triumphalist – Ives's haunted chromatic textures cloak the music in a sombre melancholy, commemorating the sacrifices of Shaw's regiment and the bloody tragedy of the Civil War conflict.

> **Completed in 1914, *Three Places* is rich in evocative sound-memories of the US**

Another American military campaign, the Revolutionary War of 1775-83 against the British, provides the background of the second movement, 'Putnam's Camp, Redding, Connecticut'. In it, Ives draws on childhood memories of an Independence Day picnic near his hometown of Danbury, and the wild cacophony unleashed by Fourth of July festivities.

The clashing groups of musicians in 'Putnam's Camp', playing across one another in dissonant contention, is no artful invention on Ives's part. It is exactly what he had often heard as a boy, when town bands marched in procession together, one advancing, the other receding, keys and rhythms clashing in what for Ives was a glorious celebration of community music-making.

At the movement's centre, the child-observer sees a vision of General Putnam himself, rallying his beleaguered troops to fresh exertions in battle. A plethora of popular tunes ('Hail, Columbia' and 'The British Grenadiers' among them) are heaped together to evoke this half-real, half-imaginary recollection. The effect is aurally exhilaring, but the bigger picture is important too – 'Putnam's Camp' is Ives's vision of America itself: bold, clamorous, viscerally exciting, but also veering dangerously close to chaos.

In the concluding movement, 'The Housatonic at Stockbridge,' we shift from the giddy public arena to an intimate private moment. In July 1908, Ives and his new wife Harmony went on a trip to the Berkshires in Massachusetts and took a Sunday morning stroll beside the Housatonic River near the town of Stockbridge. 'We walked in the meadows along the river, and heard the distant singing from the church across the river,' the composer later remembered. 'The mist had not entirely left the river bed, and the colours, the running water, the banks and elm trees were something that one would always remember.'

GETTY

This idyllic scene is grippingly depicted in Ives's musical reminiscence, from its hazily impressionistic opening (complete with hymn quotations) to the growing surge of water as the Housatonic proceeds 'by fall and shallow to the adventurous sea'. The strange, swirling beauty of the piece, part-tone painting, part-transcendendalist vision of divine immanence in creation, makes it one of Ives's most alluringly poetic compositions.

Three Places In New England waited 17 years for its first public performance, on 10 January 1931 at the Town Hall, New York. At conductor Nicolas Slonimsky's request,

New England scenes: (clockwise from above) a Fourth of July march past, as depicted in 'Putnam's Camp, Redding, Connecticut'; Nicolas Slonimsky, conductor of the *Three Places* premiere; the Housatonic River at Stockbridge, Massachusetts; the Robert Gould Shaw Memorial in Boston

Ives had trimmed his full orchestral score to fit the 24 players of the Boston Chamber Orchestra. It would be another four decades before Ives scholar James Sinclair reconstructed the original version in all its teeming glory.

The premiere was far from perfect, Slonimsky himself assessing it as 'somewhat scrambling'. Better performances followed in Boston, then overseas in Havana and Paris, and Ives was eternally grateful for the Russian-born conductor's belief in his music, at a time when few others shared it. Slonimsky for his part never doubted that *Three Places In New England* was a veritable masterpiece. 'I experienced a strange, but unmistakable, feeling,' he later wrote, 'that I was looking at a work of genius.'

Turn the page to discover our recommended recordings of Ives's Three Places in New England

Controlled chaos: Eugene Ormandy brings clarity to even the wildest moments

The best recording

Ives with impact and insight

Eugene Ormandy *(conductor)*

Philadelphia Orchestra

RCA 88725417202

First, a caveat: conductor Eugene Ormandy made two recordings of *Three Places in New England* with the Philadelphia Orchestra, so make sure that it's the second one you listen to. Released in 1976, eight years after the first, it's by some distance the better-sounding and more texturally informative of the two.

Ormandy benefits enormously from having a famously world-class orchestra at his disposal. This is particularly consequential in 'Putnam's Camp', where the Swiss-clock precision of the players' counting – as different metres and rhythms collide with one another – brings a sharp-edged clarity to music which can so easily seem like an inchoate mush in other recordings.

A technically superlative ensemble has other benefits too. Where some

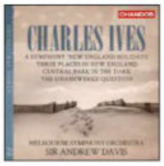
The Philadelphia string playing is wonderfully unanimous and articulate

orchestras bring an element of care and circumspection to getting all the notes articulated, the super-virtuosic Philadelphians simply rip into 'Putnam' with a brio befitting its origins in marching band music, and with a fearless brand of confidence. The conclusion is organised pandemonium – Ives himself would surely have loved it.

Earlier, in 'The "St. Gaudens" in Boston Common', the Philadelphia string playing is wonderfully unanimous and articulate, and Ormandy shapes cogently a movement which can easily sag and meander. The instrumental layerings of 'The Housatonic at Stockbridge' are immaculately balanced, its powerful crescendo inexorably constructed.

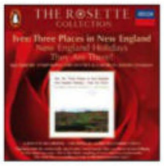
The recording was made in 1974 at the Scottish Rite Cathedral, Philadelphia (now a parking lot), and boasts many of the finest attributes of analogue sound – clean focus, tonal accuracy and excellent balancing between the instruments. Its dynamic range is not as wide as Andrew Davis's Chandos recording (see above),

Three other great recordings



Andrew Davis (conductor)

This is comfortably the best-recorded *Three Places* in the catalogue, and for those with surround-sound equipment offers an especially immersive experience. The Chandos engineers give a uniquely transparent insight into the pell-mell layerings and confrontations of 'Putnam's Camp,' and sift the delicate strands of string polyphony in 'The Housatonic at Stockbridge' with more finesse than any other version. Davis was a longtime advocate of Ives, and this 2015 release does the composer's music proud. *(Chandos CHSA5163)*

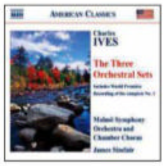


David Zinman (conductor)

For sheer beauty, look no further. Too beautiful, some might say – even the ruckus and free-for-all of 'Putnam's Camp' has a Richard Strauss-like polish to it which smooths off some deliberately rough Ivesian edges. And yet the lush, seductive string playing in 'St Gaudens' is hard to resist, as is the gauzy sentience distilled by Zinman and the Baltimore players in 'The Housatonic at Stockbridge.' The sense of romantic yearning in Ives's music is nowhere better illustrated than this 2004 recording. *(Decca 476 1537)*

Michael Tilson Thomas (conductor)
This 1970 Boston Symphony release is the first, and better, of Michael Tilson Thomas's two recordings of *Three Places*, and marked him as an outstanding Ives interpreter. His 'St Gaudens' is particularly impressive, purposefully paced and with a notably dark undertow emotionally. 'Putnam's Camp' has kick and swagger, although the recorded sound lacks the transparency of rival versions, and the overall impression is slightly cluttered. 'The Housatonic at Stockbridge' is more trepidatious than idyllic, the river-surge harbouring within it glowering forces, indeed a hint of tragedy. *(Deutsche Grammophon 463 6332)*

And one to avoid...



Musicologist and conductor James Sinclair has performed immeasurable service to Ives studies over the years, but his 2008 recording of *Three Places* is not the one through which listeners should get to know the piece. It presents an early version of the work (1914), differing in key respects from Sinclair's own full-score restitution, and as such is mainly of scholarly interest. Much more intriguing is Sinclair's recording of the chamber arrangement Slonimsky used at the premiere – currently unavailable, it urgently requires reissue.

nor are its textures quite so piercingly transparent. But in terms of visceral impact, no other version catches the freshness of Ives's inspiration quite so vividly, nor the extraordinarily individual slant of his musical imagination.

Among conductors of his period based in the US, Ormandy is regularly placed a distant third behind the more obviously charismatic George Szell and Fritz Reiner – both, like Ormandy, Budapest-born. But only a truly great conductor could have made this outstanding recording of *Three Places in New England*, an undoubted classic in the Ives discography.

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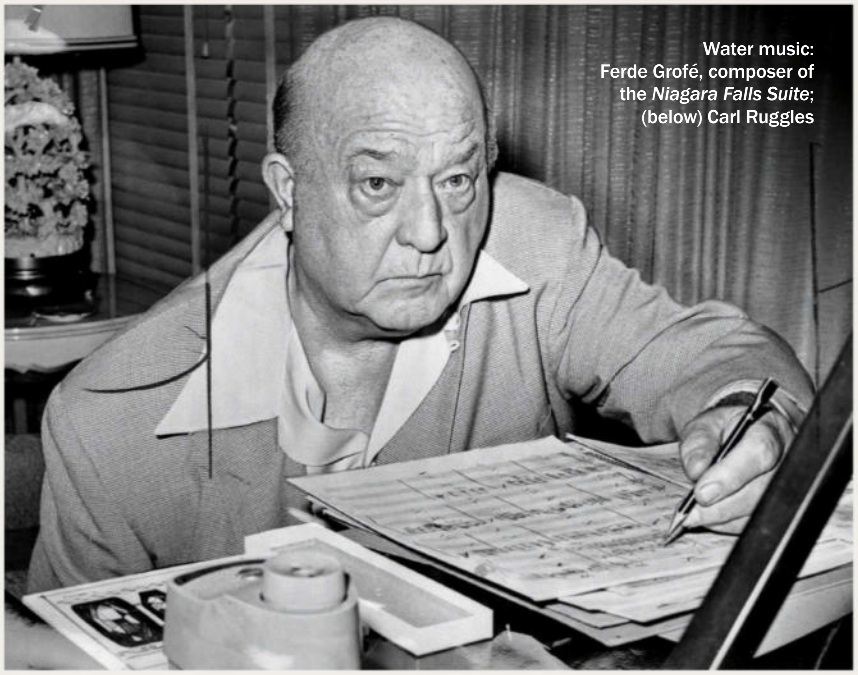
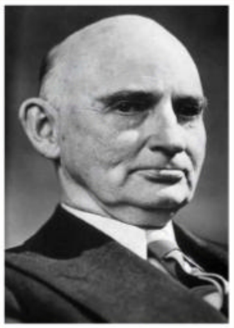


Water music: Ferde Grofé, composer of the *Niagara Falls Suite*; (below) Carl Ruggles

Continue the journey...

We suggest works to explore after Ives's Three Places in New England

Dating from 1905, **Ives**'s *A Symphony: New England Holidays* plunges us into late-February gloom for 'Washington's Birthday' before playing its way through the seasons in 'Decoration Day', 'The Fourth of July' and 'Thanksgiving and Forefathers' Day'. As with *Three Places*, familiar tunes and dissonance compete for elbow room amid vivid orchestral scene-painting. **(Seattle SO/ Ludovic Morlot** *Seattle Symphony Media SSM1015***)**



For his *New England Triptych* of 1956, ***William Schuman*** used as his starting point the songs of US composer William Billings (1746-1800), remarking on 'the spirit of sinewy ruggedness, deep religiosity and patriotic fervor that we associate with the Revolutionary period in American history'. But in Schuman's hands, the three movements – 'Be Glad then America', 'When Jesus Wept' and 'Chester' – are presented in the language of his own era. **(Dallas Symphony Orchestra/Andrew Litton** *Dorian DOR-90224***)**

Heading south-west, we come to *Kentucky Spring*, a 12-minute orchestral work written by ***Roy Harris*** in 1949. It's a largely sprightly, sunny affair, which makes allusions to the state song 'My Old Kentucky Home' both in the first entry of the trumpets and in the coda for strings at the end. **(Louisville Orchestra/Robert Whitney** *First Edition LOU-602***)**

Along with Ives, ***Carl Ruggles*** was one of a quintet of composers sometimes referred to as the 'American Five'. Though Ruggles's symphonic poem *Sun-Treader* (1931) took its title from a term in Browning's romantic poem *Pauline*, the piece is anything but romantic – aggressively pounded timpani launch a full-scale atonal orchestral assault that only occasionally pauses for respite. **(Cleveland Orchestra/C von Dohnányi** *Decca 443 7762***)**

> Aggressively pounded timpani launch a full-scale atonal assault

Finally, head to the Canadian border for ***Ferde Grofé***'s 1961 *Niagara Falls Suite*. 'Thunder of the Waters' portrays the magnificent sight and sound that greets visitors, while the closing 'Power of Niagara – 1961' points to the Falls' important role in an industrial age. In between, 'Devil's Hole Massacre' reminds us of a dark episode from history, and 'Honeymooners' joins loved-up holiday makers in their state of romantic bliss. **(Bournemouth SO/William T Stromberg** *Naxos 8.559007***)**

Reviews

Recordings and books rated by expert critics

Welcome

Can it be the June issue already? I'm delighted to be back in the Reviews Editor's chair, which has been kept warm by Steve Wright. My thanks to him for keeping these pages full of great music, too, this issue included. You'll be dazzled by the latest works by Augusta Read Thomas (our Recording of the Month) and Dani Howard, captivated by a final turn from Mark Elder at the helm of the Hallé and entranced (or perhaps unnerved) by an operatic take on Stephen King's *The Shining*.

It's always interesting to hear what film composers do when freed from the bounds of the cinema screen, so I was delighted to see James Ehnes's view of John Williams's First Violin Concerto in the mix here, not to mention Rachel Portman's new concerto, *Tipping Points*.
Michael Beek *Reviews editor*

This month's critics

Nicholas Anderson, Michael Beek, Terry Blain, Kate Bolton-Porciatti, Geoff Brown, Michael Church, Christopher Cook, Martin Cotton, Christopher Dingle, Misha Donat, Jessica Duchen, Rebecca Franks, Andrew Green, George Hall, Claire Jackson, Michael Jameson, John-Pierre Joyce, Nicholas Kenyon, Ashutosh Khandekar, Erik Levi, Natasha Loges, Andrew McGregor, David Nice, Steph Power, Paul Riley, Jan Smaczny, Jo Talbot, Roger Thomas, Sarah Urwin Jones, Kate Wakeling, Alexandra Wilson

KEY TO STAR RATINGS

★★★★★	Outstanding
★★★★	Excellent
★★★	Good
★★	Disappointing
★	Poor

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

A box of resplendent musical treasures

Kate Wakeling basks in the glow of this shimmering collection of recent works by US composer Augusta Read Thomas

Augusta Read Thomas

Terpsichore's Box of Dreams*; Carnival for Bassoon and Wind Ensemble; Star Box; Dance Mobile etc
*Grossman Ensemble/
Tim Weiss et al
Nimbus NI 6445 69:26 mins

For composer Augusta Read Thomas, the arrival of a new musical idea often feels 'like a spark or lightning bolt – like lighting a match – and suddenly, poof, there's an illumination, an inspiration, if you will.' Thomas's music itself fizzes with this same vivid sense of energy; her complex, imaginative scores verily zing with life and colour, while readily charting profound emotional depths. As such, Thomas is well-established as one of America's most accomplished and inventive contemporary composers.

This outstanding release from Nimbus forms part of a long-running survey of Thomas's work spanning some 30 years of music, but this album focuses on relatively recent work (the earliest piece included dates from 2018). The selection nonetheless showcases the breadth of her composition, both in its varied sonorities and creative subject matter.

Terpsichore's Box of Dreams (2023) for chamber ensemble is the album's most substantial work. Devised as a sequence of seven dances, the piece explores the sensibilities of the muse Terpsichore, 'goddess of dance and delight', and imagines her 'box of dreams', out of which tumble a 'kaleidoscopic profusion [of] ideas and colours'. It is a remarkable score: mercurial in its wit and beauty with moments of shimmering poignancy (the third dance also receives this top-notch title: 'Pointillistic Groove Flutter Pirouettes') and it here receives an aptly pliant and sparky

Pliant and sparky reading: Tim Weiss and the Grossman Ensemble lift the lid of *Terpsichore's Box of Dreams*

reading from the Grossman Ensemble under Tim Weiss.

Among many highlights, *Carnival* (2022) also stands out, framed here as a concerto for bassoon 'locking horns' with a wind ensemble. Soloist Nadina Mackie Jackson gives an especially rollicking performance and her strident solo line is met with stinging retorts from SUNY Fredonia Wind Ensemble (conducted with flair by Paula Holcomb) in this exhilaratingly spiky work.

Dance Mobile (2021) for chamber orchestra also lands with particular power. The work was composed to commemorate Oliver Knussen, one of Thomas's composition teachers and a longstanding friend, and conveys more of a sense of celebration than memorial. Combining a marvellous agility and a certain steely beauty, the work is formed from three interconnected dances, which Thomas conceived of 'as if [each] hanging on an Alexander Calder-like mobile, suspended so as to turn freely in the air'.

Thomas's remarkable score is mercurial in its wit and beauty with moments of poignancy

Thomas's smaller-scale works are no less delightful. *Laetitia's Caprice* (2023) is a graceful 'fanfare' for solo soprano saxophone (exquisitely performed by Phil Pierick) while *Bebop Riddle II* (2022) showcases Thomas's longstanding devotion to jazz in a wonderfully tricksy musical conversation for piano and cello (marked *pizzicato* throughout). Two pieces for percussion quartet complete the selection. *Con Moto* (2018) has the feel of an intricate musical jigsaw, the four musical lines interlocking with arresting precision, while the deft and glimmering *Star Box* (2020) is another affectingly unsentimental musical memorial, this time written for composer Jacob Druckman, who taught Thomas at Yale in the 1980s.

Beautifully performed and recorded, the whole selection has the feeling of a musical treasure trove, resplendent in its sense of vitality, beauty and imaginative possibility.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

TANYA ROSEN-JONES, ANTHONY NGUYEN

Performer's notes
Tim Weiss

What were your impressions of *Terpsichore's Box of Dreams*?
Gusty knows the players extremely well as colleagues and friends, so she was able to write for their musical personalities. It has this virtuosity and this brilliance to it that exploits each player's unique gifts. I think the slow music is so beautiful; and she has a really great sense for timing, how long she holds tension and how she releases it. Some of those moments that are very static feel so right in the way that they contrast with periods of incredible activity. It dances and it's light on its feet.

Tell us about the incredible Grossman Ensemble...
It gives roughly four concerts a year, at least three of which are dedicated to premieres. Gusty created it as a special ensemble that exists uniquely to work directly with composers. The first rehearsal can be anything – it can be a piece mostly fleshed out, or it can literally be guided improvisation. Over the course of four rehearsals the composer then creates a finished piece, so there's a little bit more opportunity for workshopping.

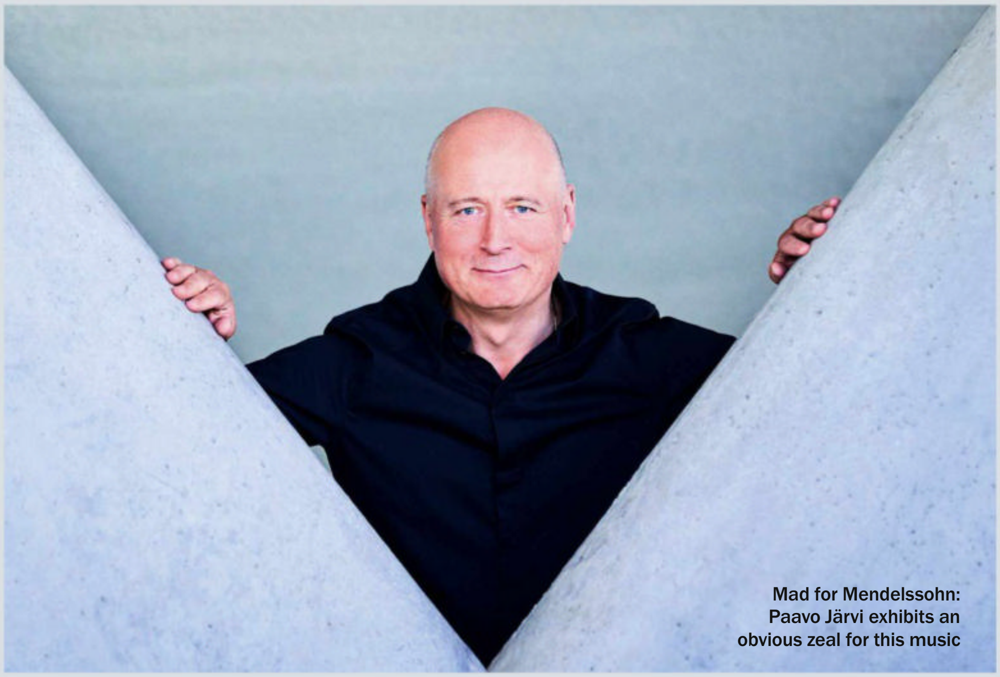
How did *Terpsichore's Box of Dreams* develop?
We had the piece mapped out, but in the first rehearsal we only dealt with the first four minutes. Gusty had a multitude of little tweaks or revisions, things she wanted to experiment with and try. So it was a little experimental in a way, which was good, and then the ensemble and I were able to give her feedback. It was a great collaboration process; I think the ensemble always feels like it has a real stamp on the final product, and that's very nice.

Orchestral

ORCHESTRAL CHOICE

Memorable Mendelssohn from a perfect partnership

Paavo Järvi and the Tonhalle Orchestra's take on this set of symphonies is electrifying, says ***Terry Blain***



Mad for Mendelssohn: Paavo Järvi exhibits an obvious zeal for this music

Mendelssohn

Symphonies Nos 1-5; A Midsummer Night's Dream, Op. 61
Tonhalle-Orchester Zurich/Paavo Järvi
Alpha Classics ALPHA 1004 230 mins (4 discs)

Paavo Järvi became chief conductor of the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich in 2019, and the five years since have yielded gripping recordings of Tchaikovsky and Bruckner symphonies. This new release of Mendelssohn's complete symphonies confirms the symbiotic relationship Järvi has forged with the orchestra, and is jam-packed with exciting, at times electrifying, music-making.

The minor-key opening movement of Symphony No. 1 is a statement of intent, lithe and surgingly athletic, though not at the expense of brighter lyrical moments. Ensemble is bracingly tight without seeming over-regimented, even in Järvi's fizzing account of the *Allegro con fuoco* finale. Symphony No. 4 launches in similar fashion, and its *Saltarello* finale boasts brilliantly agile wind playing and a bristling energy which grips from start to finish.

> Symphony No. 4 boasts a bristling energy which grips from start to finish

The inclusion on Disc 4 of the incidental music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a considerable bonus. Dreamier accounts of the famous *Notturno* are available, but the animation and unflagging articulacy of the Tonhalle players make this another performance to savour.

Nowhere, perhaps, is Järvi's zeal for Mendelssohn more evident than in Symphony No. 2, a long work where maintaining attention can be difficult. Here the 40-minute sequence of concluding vocal movements is triumphantly sustained, with a blazing contribution from the Zürcher Sing-Akademie.

Many rival versions of this music exist, but it's difficult to think of any which surpass Järvi's for insight, immediacy and sheer enjoyment.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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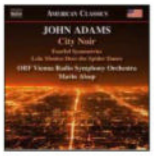
John Adams

City Noir etc
ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra/Marin Alsop
Naxos 8.559935 69:06 mins



Stereotyped thinking would suggest that no Viennese orchestra should relinquish waltzing for an album whose cover is emblazoned with an aerial shot of the Los Angeles sprawl glistening at night. But the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra's chief conductor, remember, is Marin Alsop, and she guides them through this programme of ultra-American music by John Adams with typical dedication and vim.

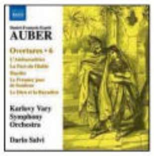
If the main piece, *City Noir*, from 2009, doesn't convince as it should, the fault lies not with the versatile orchestra or the committed Alsop but with Adams himself, who seems so hypnotised by his vision of LA as a 'film noir' city of dark shadows and unease that he lets his over-worked and fidgety tapestry spread over a half-hour symphonic canvas without the necessary musical argument or architecture to provide sufficient structural support. Jazzy or lurid solos for trombone, alto sax and trumpet come and go, but little momentum is achieved until the final frenzied onslaught.

Happily, the album also contains the more abstract and exuberant delights of *Fearful Symmetries* (1988), a work almost as long, but closer to Adams's minimalist beginnings and audibly written in *Nixon in China*'s shadow, with textured pulsing patterns brilliantly sustained by a conductor and orchestra who never flag. This work demands repeated hearings. I can't really say the same for the itchy and scratchy *Lola Montez Does the Spider Dance*, written in 2016 to honour Alsop's long tenure directing the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music. But it does last only five minutes. *Geoff Brown*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Auber

Overtures, Vol. 6: L'Ambassadrice; Haydée etc
Karlovy Vary Symphony Orchestra/Dario Salvi
Naxos 8.574532 87:06 mins



Naxos's survey of operatic overtures and associated works by Daniel-François-Esprit Auber (1782-1871) reaches its sixth instalment, with Dario Salvi conducting the Karlovy Vary (formerly Carlsbad) Symphony Orchestra. New to the series, they play with aplomb and commitment under Salvi, while creditable production values impart burnished sonics and ample realism.

What you'll inevitably miss here, though, is Richard Bonynge's finesse and natural ease in this repertoire, and capable as it is, the Czech ensemble can't match the playing of the Suisse Romande Orchestra and LSO on Decca's 2017 Auber compilation (ELQ4827730).

Not all of these unfamiliar offerings stand to make an enduring impression upon the listener when experienced outside of their intended theatrical context. Despite the freshness and vitality of Salvi's direction, there's something predictably formulaic about this music, unsurprising perhaps, given that this prolific composer has almost 50 operas to his credit!

At its best, though, Auber's inventiveness and dramatic flair vouchsafe entertaining listening, with the overtures to *La Part du Diable* and *Le Dieu et la Bayadère* demonstrating his adroit orchestration (not lost on Berlioz or Tchaikovsky, incidentally) to very good effect.

Equally engaging is the Act II *Divertissement*, in which Auber used passages lifted from Mozart's string quartet K421, the G minor Symphony, K550, and the Piano Sonata No. 11 (K331), assembled for the Paris Opera's 1866 revival of *Don Giovanni*. Finally, a serviceable recording of the high-spirited overture to *Le Premier jour de Bonheur* (1868) has been long overdue. It receives a rousing reading here from Dario Salvi, whose reliably intelligent performances are complimented by informative booklet notes from Auber authority Robert Ignatius Letellier. *Michael Jameson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Elgar

Symphonies Nos 1 & 2
Hallé Orchestra/Mark Elder
Hallé CD HLD 7564 114:21 mins (2 discs)

It was some 20 years ago that the Hallé and their then newish music director Mark Elder first recorded Elgar's Symphonies Nos 1 & 2 on the orchestra's newly-minted record label. With Elder's final season with the Hallé having now come to a close, he and his Manchester forces revisit the symphonies in this new recording.

It is ever-compelling stuff. The orchestra find the emotional centre in the 'noble' – that oh so tricky word – opening to Elgar's First, recorded in the Bridgewater Hall under Covid restrictions in 2021 – you can sense the development from their 2003 recording. Elder underlines the understated warmth in Elgar's pacing beat, and a great expansive feeling of joy. The second theme, too, seems to emanate affection, and there is lovely sound in this and the ensuing *Allegro*.

Elgar's slow-burn *Adagio* is played with great articulation by the Hallé, its moving denouement exquisitely touching here. There is perhaps a slight loss of impetus at the beginning of the fourth movement, and a little imbalance in sound with the brass, but it is swiftly regained as the main theme returns towards the finely-judged finale.

The Second Symphony, recorded in the Bridgewater Hall in 2018, has always been seen as more elusive, even to its first audience – yet ever convincing here. Elder's forces give a ravishing finale to the first movement, before the deeply-affecting *Larghetto*, tenderly done. If anything really hits home it is the patient facility of Elgar in slow movements, and Elder's understanding of their trajectory. The Hallé's strings colour the ravishing tapestry of the final movement in a lovely swelling of sound, which in the final moments is superbly evoked, before the last, unflashy farewell.
Sarah Urwin Jones

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Dani Howard

Orchestral Works: Arches; Ellipsis; Coalescence; Argentum*; Trombone Concerto*
Peter Moore (trombone); Royal Liverpool Philharmonic/Michael Seal*/Pablo Urbina
Rubicon RCD1125 58:05 mins

Trombone exploration: Peter Moore plays Dani Howard's Concerto

KAUPO KIKKAS, BENJAMIN EALOVEGA

Is it fair to describe the style of any composer in comparative terms? On the one hand, if there's an identifiable tradition behind a new work, then perhaps it's reasonable to allude to it. On the other, the music of Dani Howard, who was born in Hong Kong and trained in the UK, sounds American (in a very good way), its mellifluous but never syrupy optimism sitting alongside that of Copland and John Adams; so much, then, for facile critical models. Barely into her thirties, Howard has injected some useful qualities into the current movement towards overtly listener-friendly music and this release sees a warmly-recorded orchestra, two conductors and a soloist taking her approach on board with empathy and aplomb. Her rhythms are capricious, her melodies good-humoured and often couched in gently deceptive phrasing and lush yet unpredictable orchestration. She favours the brisk approach to development (possibly derived from popular music and soundtracks?) that seems to be a thing for composers of her generation, but deploys it elegantly. The trombone concerto at the centre of this recording imaginatively explores the instrument's varied capabilities, evoking the approach (albeit not the style) of Gordon Jacob. The scintillation of the opening piece and the alternating assertiveness and baited-breath atmospherics of the three further works are equally arresting. If there's a rub anywhere, then perhaps it lies here, in that Howard has found her style and currently seems inclined to stick to it. That said, there's time enough for diversification if it suits her.
Roger Thomas

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Musorgsky • Rimsky-Korsakov

Rimsky-Korsakov: Scheherazade; **Musorgsky:** Night on Bald Mountain (incl. vocal version, orch. Shebalin)
Orchestra, Coro e Voci Bianche dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia/Antonio Pappano
Warner Classics 5419793369 69 mins

This trio of Russian exotic/supernatural masterpieces comes from live performances spanning eight of conductor Antonio Pappano's 18 transformative years at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. It feels organic, above all as the *fortissimo* diablerie of

Musorgsky's original score for *Night on Bald Mountain* explodes after the becalmed final chord of *Scheherazade*. Only Rimsky-Korsakov's orchestration of his colleague's infernal rites is missing – to my mind, still the best, but Pappano is right to observe that in that 1867 tone poem everything is 'distilled to very basic elements'. It still feels minutes too long, but there has not been a more feral performance. Then we have the luxury of Italian operatic voices and Bulgarian bass-baritone Deyan Vatchkov as lord of misrule in the version devised for the unfinished opera *Sorochintsy Fair*, orchestrated by Shebalin. It's the perfect way to end, especially with those woodwind pipings giving the cue to Stravinsky for the start of his *Rite of Spring*.

This *Scheherazade* also achieves Pappano's stated aims. The singing quality peaks in 'The Story of the Kalendar Prince', a veritable opera for orchestra, starting with a supremely free bassoon solo. Leader Carlo Maria Parazzoli's narrator keeps her air of mystery, and the big moments, from the brassy opening which seizes you by the throat to the big trombone in the climactic reprise of Sinbad's sea-journey, have incredible vividness. That partly pardons the too-close miking of the violins, and while my first reaction to an unscored cymbal clash was 'what the heck', I then decided, 'why not?' It turns out Pappano took his cue from inveterate retoucher Stokowski, and this superb performance is none the worse for it. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Debut delights: Mikhail Pletnev's new ensemble is already finely honed

Shchedrin • Tchaikovsky

Tchaikovsky: Swan Lake Suite; **Shchedrin:** Carmen Suite
Rachmaninov International Orchestra/Mikhail Pletnev
EuroArts 2011067 87 mins

This orchestra was founded a couple of years ago by pianist and conductor Mikhail Pletnev and draws its membership from a mixture of experienced Western and Eastern European musicians. Judging by this debut recording, it is already a finely honed ensemble, though on the evidence of the challenging fast-running passagework that follows the Introduction to Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, the playing doesn't yet boast the razor-sharp precision of articulation that perhaps can only be achieved by a long-established orchestra. But this is a relatively minor disadvantage when measured against the commitment of the performance as a whole.

In contrast to the well-known concert suite, which was first published some years after the composer's death, Pletnev has opted to create his own arrangement of Tchaikovsky's work. This preserves the narrative chronological sequence of music as it unfolds throughout the ballet. Inevitably some famous highlights are not featured here, such as the Waltz from Act 1 and the 'Dance of the Swans' from Act 2. Although these are wonderful pieces in their own right, I can't say that I sorely missed them. But if you feel aggrieved at their absence, it would be best to access Pletnev's recording of the complete ballet with the Russian National Orchestra on Ondine.

Since Pletnev has already given us a brilliant recording of the Bizet/Shchedrin *Carmen Suite* with the Russian National Orchestra for DG, this new version may seem a bit superfluous. I must confess that I have not made a direct comparison between the two performances, but this one certainly has plenty of drive, rhythmic exuberance and expressive intensity. *Erik Levi*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

BACKGROUND TO…
John Adams's *City Noir*

Composed for the Los Angeles Philharmonic and its conductor Gustavo Dudamel, and premiered by them in October 2009, *City Noir* is essentially a 30-minute symphony. It forms the third part of Adams's Californian triptych, begun by the orchestral work *El Dorado* (1991) and the violin concerto *The Dharma at Big Sur* (2003), and takes its lead from Kevin Starr's evocative book *Embattled Dreams*. Full of energy and knowingly cinematic, the work sees Adams evoke a vision of Los Angeles found in the literature, journalism and movies of the 1940s and '50s; a city of shadows and seedy sensationalism.

GETTY

All These Lighted Things

Prokofiev: Romeo and Juliet – excerpts; **Ravel:** Daphnis et Chloë Suite No. 2; **Elizabeth Ogonek:** All These Lighted Things
Antwerp Symphony Orchestra/Elim Chan
Alpha ALPHA1038 71:07 mins

The booklet note announces this album as Elim Chan's 'own favourite choices from more than a century of ballet music': a pleasant assignment I'm sure for the Antwerp orchestra's principal conductor, though it's not so easy to see why punters would regard the result as a really essential purchase. The best attraction is the 39-minute selection from Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* score, dispatched with impressive loving care, especially in the tenderly emotional extracts describing the young Juliet and the couple's last farewell. The other ballet warhorse, Ravel's second *Daphnis et Chloé* suite, is delivered with its own aplomb, though compared to the aching beauties presented in the Prokofiev, conductor and musicians seem a little outside the notes, delivering the surface, but less of the soul.

In between comes the one novelty: not a ballet score per se, but as its subtitle announces, three short dances for orchestra. Written in 2017 by the American composer Elizabeth Ogonek during her time as resident composer with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, *All These Lighted Things* is a meretricious creation. Sounds and textures are fleetingly striking (plucked double-basses plus timpani, shards and shimmerings of abundant percussion), but they seem for display purposes only and never build into a work that merits a title taken from a poem by the Trappist monk and interfaith champion Thomas Merton or builds into something genuinely symphonic. The orchestra plays well enough, and is helped by the warm, clear recording. But we can all think of music that better deserves Elim Chan's flair: music that genuinely cries out for dance as it spins an atmosphere, tells a story, moves gracefully, or kicks up its heels. *Geoff Brown*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

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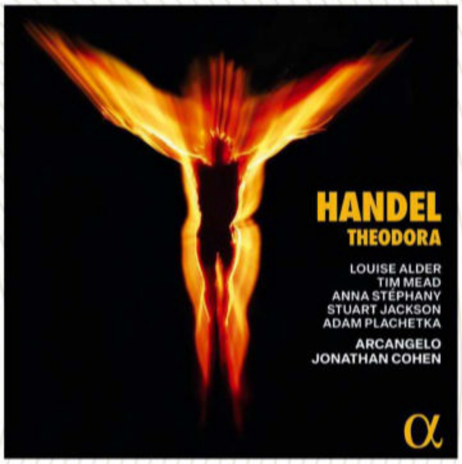

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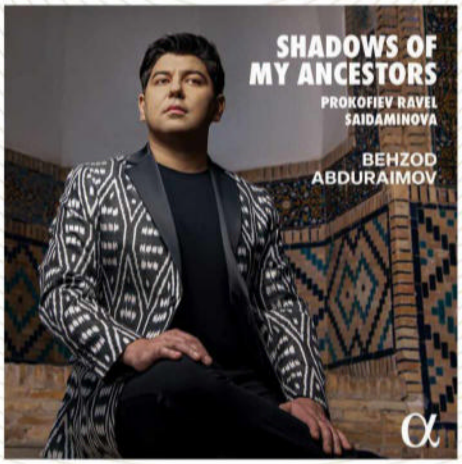

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CONCERTO CHOICE

An inventive melting pot of an album

Martin Cotton **enjoys a diverse and colourful palette from Michael Zev Gordon**

Michael Zev Gordon

The Impermanence of Things; Bohortha†; Violin Concerto*^
*Carolin Widmann (violin); BBC NOW/^Catherine Larsen-Maguire; BBC Symphony Orchestra/†Jukka-Pekka Saraste et al
NMC NMCD277 74 mins

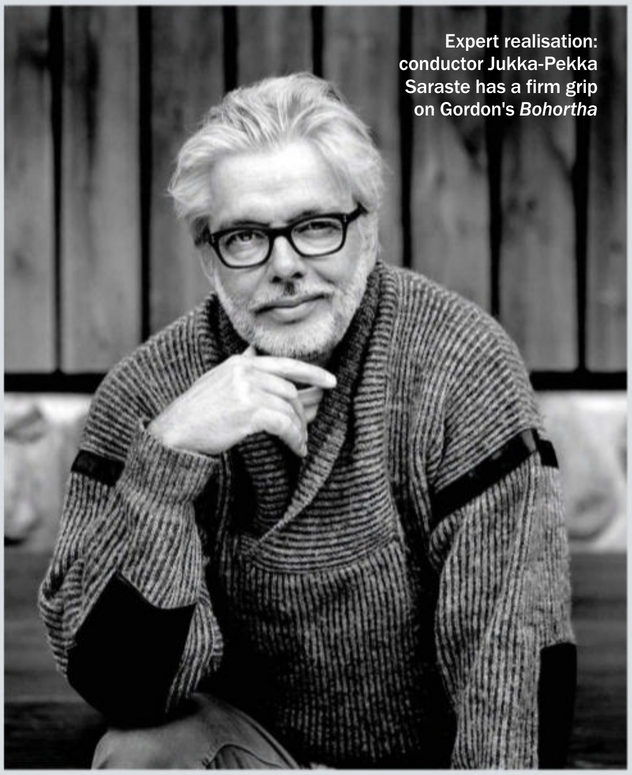
Gordon says that for years he has been 'mixing together diverse materials and styles in the same piece' which sounds easier than it is, and these three works all demonstrate a fine composer's ear for harmony, texture and, above all, timing. *The Impermanence of Things* (2009) is a series of 13 short movements which entwine different elements, sometimes with rhythmic repetition, sometimes with quiet observation, as wisps of pre-existing material – Couperin, Schumann, Debussy and Mahler – rub shoulders with Gordon's own inventions.

Bohortha (2012) enlarges the tonal palette to full orchestra, and there is generally greater expanse in the lengths of the seven movements, but the idea of quotation is even more to the fore, especially in the second movement, 'Broken Pieces', where the game of spotting the originals is ultimately pointless. The music has an inner momentum all its own, whether restrained, as in the suspended fourth movement, or rhythmically active like the ensuing *scherzo*; and there is always much to listen to in the kaleidoscopic scoring, expertly realised by Saraste and the BBC Symphony.

> **The Violin Concerto is utterly gripping from start to finish**

The Violin Concerto (2017) is more traditional in structure, with three substantial movements, far more internal continuity, and less, if any, use of pre-existing musical material. It's basically a lyrical work, designed to show how many nuances of singing Widmann could bring to her playing. Right from the initial two-note figure, through the alternately dancing and stomping *scherzo*, to the finale, it is utterly gripping.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★



Expert realisation: conductor Jukka-Pekka Saraste has a firm grip on Gordon's *Bohortha*

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Beethoven • Brett Dean

Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 5; **Brett Dean:** A Winter's Journey
Jonathan Biss (piano); Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra/David Afkham
Orchid Classics ORC100291 64 mins

Jonathan Biss's recent autobiography details the pianist's dedication to the composer, and while a career spent in Beethoven's shadow has led to jarring emotional self-discovery, Biss's own pianism is wondrous for its apparent ease. Ironically, it is the quiet stillness that he finds in Beethoven that marks Biss as a master. Where others fall for dandyish brashness – midway through the first movement in the Fifth Concerto, for example – Biss is restrained; allowing the developing melody to shimmer but not dazzle. His account of the third movement is one of the few that observes the 'ma non troppo' part of the *Allegro* title – lively, 'but not too much'.

This is the fifth and final instalment in his *Beethoven/5* series, a project that has paired Beethoven's piano concertos with newly commissioned works by Timo Andres, Sally Beamish, Salvatore Sciarrino, Caroline Shaw and now Brett Dean. The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra are the original collaborators, and it is to their credit that the programme has been picked up by many other ensembles in the intervening years, including, here, the Swedish Radio Symphony. Dean takes inspiration from Beethoven's ill-fated visit to Gneixendorf, where the composer fell out with his brother and contracted the pneumonia that would contribute to his death a short time later. The music quotes from the corresponding concerto, but cleverly distorts the original material. A muffled sound is achieved when Biss moves from the concert grand to an upright placed within the orchestra – a not-so-subtle, yet compelling, reference to Beethoven's deafness. *Claire Jackson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Bernstein • John Williams

Bernstein: Serenade; **John Williams:** Violin Concerto No. 1
James Ehnes (violin); St Louis Symphony/Stéphane Denève
Pentatone PTC 5187 148 61:31 mins

Bernstein's *Serenade* was inspired by Plato's *Symposium*, and each of its five movements bears the name of one of the protagonists who speak at the banquet in praise of love, although you can easily listen to it without referring to the programmatic element. The soaring opening theme acts as a

FELIX BROEDE

first-movement introduction before giving way to a jaggedly rhythmic *Allegro*, enhanced by the scoring for strings and percussion, as well as by Ehnes's technical command of the double stops and acrobatics. He finds elegant poise in the second movement, manic energy in the short central *scherzo*, and the long lyrical line in the *Adagio* – the nearest Bernstein comes to writing a conventional melody – before the weight at the beginning of the finale gives way to a raucous, jazzy celebration. The orchestra comes to the fore here, playing with energy and intensity, captured in the depth and precision of the recording.

John Williams's 1976 Concerto starts in a similar way to the Bernstein, with a long solo passage, although there is more pain here, reflecting the circumstances of its composition as a memorial to his first wife. Angst is never far away, even in the restless faster music, and informs the tortured harmonies of the elegiac slow movement, subtitled 'In peaceful contemplation', although the peace is an uneasy one, interrupted by a more scurrying central section, before a generally relentless finale. Ehnes and the orchestra give their all to the music, but it's a tough listen, and might surprise those who know Williams from his film scores. *Martin Cotton*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Nielsen

Flute Concerto; Symphony No. 3; Pan and Syrinx
Adam Walker (flute); Bergen Philharmonic/Edward Gardner
Chandos CHSA5312 62:53 mins

This is Edward Gardner and the Bergen Philharmonic's second album of the music of Nielsen, following last year's recording of the Violin Concerto. This time the Flute Concerto takes centre stage alongside the symphonic poem *Pan og Syrinx* and the Third Symphony. These complementary pieces are threaded by Nielsen's evocations of nature, and his sinuous ability to sketch character, atmosphere and an abstract sense of storytelling.

The dynamic *Pan og Syrinx* is based on the myth of the nymph Syrinx, who in her desperation to escape the god Pan's clutches, is transformed into a clump of water reeds. Woodwinds duly evoke reed beds; Pan relentlessly pursues through the orchestra. Gardner and the Bergen Phil colour Nielsen's thrilling bursts of drama with a visceral sense of Pan's frustration and Syrinx's desperation, and an evocative frittering away to rustling reeds to end.

The two movement Flute Concerto is a late work, a pared-down, more modernist diptych, with a central flute part which flips from spare abstraction to joyous modern lyricism. Walker is a superbly lucid and agile protagonist. The 'tranquillos' are achingly so, and the Bergen nimble in support.

Nielsen's enduring dynamic volatility is again on display in his 'Sinfonia espansiva', his Third, with Gardner and the Bergen making attention-grabbing work of the punchy, driving opening, written some 15 years before the Flute Concerto. Nature abounds, with the odd echo of Mahler, particularly – wildly dancing, flourishing, to add to Nielsen's own joyous sensibility here – and Wagner, and the Bergen swing thrillingly through it all, easily switching on the intensity.

The gauzily evocative second movement pastorale culminates with luminous, offstage wordless singing over the Bergen's perfectly judged hazy orchestral arpeggios. A fine addition to any Nielsen collection. *Sarah Urwin Jones*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Technical command: violinist James Ehnes gives his all in a pair of American works

Vivaldi

The Four Seasons; Concerti d'il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione
Alfia Bakieva (violin); Les Musiciennes du Concert des Nations/ Jordi Savall
Alia Vox AVSA9958 116:24 mins (2 discs)

It must be all of five minutes since the last recording of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* came along, but veteran director Jordi Savall has come up with a fresh idea – and indeed a fresh orchestra. With a nod to the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice where Vivaldi famously taught female musicians, Savall has assembled an all-girl Baroque band to record these four concertos. Even though the *Seasons* are not specifically linked to Venice, and were published in Amsterdam, Les Musiciennes du Concert des Nations are well-focussed, energetic and, where necessary, pungent.

Savall has added the Italian poems (which Vivaldi may have written himself) that are appended to the concertos; they are wistfully and atmospherically spoken by Olivia Manescalchi. She usually speaks between the movements; with the longer poems she speaks over the music, occasionally pausing to cue in the vivid references to the turtledove, goldfinch, bluebottles and flies that Vivaldi illustrates.

That combination may be an acquired taste for non-Italian speakers, but the translated poems are there in the booklet, and for those who don't like the idea at all, Savall's second disc offers the same recording of Vivaldi's ever-fresh music unvarnished by any text. At the helm of all the concertos is the remarkable young soloist Alfia Bakieva, precise and agile, with plenty of force and focus, wiry and only lacking an ideal eloquence in the slower movements. Interesting slurring, decoration and some rhythmic alterations take the edge off the usual relentless staccato, and the plucked sound of the lute (or is it guitar?) continuo is welcome. The most striking additional piece is the single central movement from RV583, a highly decorated Chaconne of ethereal beauty. *Nicholas Kenyon*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

For Clara

Schumann: Piano Concerto, Op. 54; Kreisleriana; **Brahms:** 3 Intemezzi, Op. 117; Lieder und Gesänge, Op. 32
Camerata Salzburg/ Hélène Grimaud (piano)
DG 4865917 (digital) 103 mins (2 discs)

The French pianist Hélène Grimaud first released *For Clara* last September, and this digital-only 'extended edition' adds Robert Schumann's Piano Concerto to the original album. It is not the first time Grimaud has recorded the piece, but this new version is radically different from her 1995 collaboration with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin and David Zinman.

To begin with there is no conductor: Grimaud and Camerata Salzburg concertmaster Giovanni Guzzo between them shape decisions regarding tempo and phrasing. They also use an orchestra about half the size of Zinman's, creating what Deutsche Grammophon describes as a 'chamber version' of the concerto.

The results are mixed. Grimaud's opening statement is primed with poetry, though not all listeners will respond to her freestyle phrasing and lingering over detail. Her interplay with a solo clarinet later in the movement is exquisitely tender, but a recorded balance favouring the piano often creates an occluded

rather than intimate impression. Both Grimaud and the orchestra bring an unaffected delicacy to the *Intermezzo*, and her playing in the finale has an infectious ebullience, born of an exhilarating technical fluency. *Terry Blain*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Pärt über Bach

Bach: Sinfonia from Cantata 'Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis', BWV 21; Double Concerto in C minor, BWV 1060R; **Arvo Pärt:** Tabula Rasa; Collage über B-A-C-H; Silouan's Song
Simone Lamsma (violin); Amsterdam Sinfonietta/Candida Thompson
Channel Classics CC46624 58:13 mins

Juxtaposing a canonical and contemporary composer is an increasingly used programming device: Beethoven, for example, has been pitted against Birtwistle, Barry (Nicolas Hodges, on separate recordings), and, reviewed elsewhere in this issue, Brett Dean (Jonathan Biss). Pärt acknowledges a debt to Bach via quotations, some, as in *Collage über B-A-C-H* are verbatim and painfully direct, the musical equivalent of hitting one's funny bone. The sarabande theme on oboe and harpsichord is, apropos of nothing, blurred by clustered chords that disappear as quickly as they arrive. The work is at the heart of *Pärt über Bach*, Amsterdam Sinfonietta's carefully considered pairing of the two composers. A more subtle dichotomy underpins the *Toccata* and *Ricercar*; throughout the work, the use of pattern – particularly the cipher 'BACH', following Bach's tradition in using B as a B flat, A, C and B natural ('H' in German) – is employed to develop the melody.

It's a style that will be virtually unrecognisable to listeners more familiar with the Estonian composer's tintinnabuli principle. That spacious sound can be heard in the later *Silouan's Song*, where the Amsterdam Sinfonietta players create gentle swells of sound. The spirituality associated with this type of work is reflected in Bach's Sinfonia from *Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis*, enhanced by violinist Simone Lamsma's brilliant tone.

Two double concertos – Pärt's for two violins; Bach's for violin and oboe – sandwich the *Collage*. The ensemble drills into the detail in the *Tabula Rasa*, with effective contrasts between lead strings and the string orchestra, further underlined by prepared piano. (For comparison between Pärt and Bach's keyboard music, try Cordelia Williams's recording on SOMM.) There is thoughtful balance between soloists and ensemble throughout.
Claire Jackson

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Tipping Points

Rachel Portman: Tipping Points; **Vivaldi/Wolf Kerschek:** The New Four Seasons*
Niklas Liepe (violin); WDR Funkhausorchester/Erina Yashima; *Patrick Lange
Sony Classical 19658872672 74 mins (2 discs)

British composer Rachel Portman has forged a glittering, Oscar-winning career in film music. She here turns her attention to the concert platform, with a vibrant new piece for violin and orchestra created in collaboration with author Nick Drake. *Tipping Points* explores the four elements in the context of environmental collapse and in doing so, Portman and Drake aim simultaneously to inspire 'a sense of wonder, creative hope and imaginative agency in the listener'. Cast across six movements (interleaved with spare but expressive new poems by Drake), much of the work tends towards the latter mood, drawing on Portman's warmly emotive post-minimalist style. Gladly though, Portman also knows when to draw the sting from an orchestra and the 'Fire' flares with tumultuous, dissonant force, adding welcome depth to the work, which is performed with terrific assurance by violinist Niklas Liepe and the WDR Funkhausorchester.

Tipping Points is paired with a maximalist, 'cinematic' reimagining of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* by contemporary German composer Wolf Kerschek. The result is a flamboyant symphonic treatment of Vivaldi's original concertos which veers between the baffling and the entertaining. Some passages work very well: the martial trumpets and drums included in the finale to 'Autumn' lend the movement crisp new bite, but the added harmonies in the second movement of 'Winter' teeter dangerously into sentimental territory. Nonetheless, the whole endeavour has a sense of playful adventure to it, and Liepe again delivers a poised performance, rich in both vigour and nuance.

With the addition of three brief but charming other orchestral works by Portman (including an orchestral rendering of 'On my Planet' from her acclaimed opera *The Little Prince*) this is altogether an intriguing and appealing album.
Kate Wakeling

RECORDING ★★★★
PERFORMANCE ★★★★

Transformation

Works by Villa-Lobos, Stravinsky, Hindemith and Tchaikovsky
Jeremias Fliedl (cello); Württemberg Chamber Orchestra Heilbronn/ Emmanuel Tjeknavorian
Berlin Classics 0303274BC 56:15 mins

There's not a great deal of connection between the items in this programme except huge enthusiasm for the selected works which radiates through these performances. As Jeremias Fliedl admits in his publicity material, the music featured here is 'very close to my heart'. He also confesses to having enjoyed the process of dubbing to create his arrangement of the Villa-Lobos Fifth *Bachianas Brasilieras*. In effect, we have nine 1693 Stradivari ex Gendron cellos playing together, resulting inevitably in a sumptuous feast of cello timbres. Given the difficulty of being rhythmically precise in the process of dubbing, it's no surprise that Fliedl had to spend a week creating this recording. Yet the result is impressive, with pristine ensemble and winningly eloquent solo lines.

Having enjoyed the pedagogical benefits of a stable of formidable cello teachers, including Clemens Hagen and Heinrich Schiff, Fliedl surmounts all the technical hurdles in this repertoire without straining a muscle – a fluency required in mastering the legendary *Tarantella* of Stravinsky's *Suite Italienne*. Here the tour-de-force of thumb position and high writing is relentless, but it is served with enviable élan. I particularly liked the rustic element Fliedl brings to the Aria, not to mention his dizzying and truly exciting *Finale*.

As with countless cellists dating back centuries, Fliedl has 'borrowed' some music from other instruments – this time it's Hindemith's *Trauermusik* for viola which benefits from the lyrical warmth of the cello. A well-defined sense of line makes an expressive and cogent case for this work, enhanced by a well-honed partnership with the Württemberg Chamber Orchestra under Emmanuel Tjeknavorian. The 'concert' finishes with Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations* where the technical issues are again delivered flawlessly with poignant melodies beautifully sculpted and bravura a plenty.
Jo Talbot

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Heartfelt selection: Jeremias Fliedl presents a very personal album

BENJAMIN EALOVEGA, LUCAS BECK

OPERA CHOICE

A rollercoaster ride into the Underworld

Ashutosh Khandekar revels in Jakub Józef Orliński's definitive *Orfeo ed Euridice*

Gluck

Orfeo ed Euridice
Jakub Józef Orliński (countertenor), Fatma Said (soprano) et al; Il Giardino d'amore/Stefan Plewniak
Erato 5419789753 84 mins

Forget the preamble. After the briefest of overtures, Gluck plunges us into the heart of the tale of Orpheus: Euridice is dead and Orfeo is hell-bent on rescuing her. The music is at the service of the text, brilliantly articulated here by an accomplished ensemble delivering the terse, direct and highly expressive narrative to perfection.

Orliński is the mastermind behind the recording, made in his native Poland with a Polish orchestra and chorus. Credited as artistic director, he also sings the role of Orfeo with searing intensity, every phrase taking us on a rollercoaster ride from hope to despair and back.

Orliński's touching, plangent Orfeo dominates the opening two Acts of the opera, exchanging his innermost thoughts and fears with the ever-present chorus, and entering into his fateful pact with Fatma Said's fruity Amore. Stefan Plewniak's orchestra supplies vivid backdrops of chirping birds, babbling brooks, fallen Heroes and devilish demons as Orfeo descends to the Netherworld.

> Orliński sings the role of Orfeo with a searing intensity

French-Danish soprano Elsa Dreisig is a wonderfully feisty Euridice when she finally makes her entrance in Act 3. The increasingly frustrated exchanges between husband and wife ratchet up the tension, so that when Euridice dies again, Orfeo's 'Che farò senza Euridice?' emerges as an unexpectedly poignant moment of desolation and loss.

It all ends happily in this 1762 first version of Gluck's opera, and the composer's dramatic powers leap off the score in this fresh, lively and surely definitive recording of a time-honoured story.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Back from the dead: soprano Elsa Dreisig makes a wonderfully feisty Euridice

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Jacques Cohen

The Lady of Satis House*; When the Bough Breaks; From Behind Glass
*Marie Vassiliou (soprano); Tippett Quartet
Meridian CDE 84668 63:18 mins

Monodramas generally end badly for women. In Schoenberg's *Erwartung* she is demented and probably murdered her lover. In *La Voix humaine* Poulenc's heroine is jilted on the telephone while at the end of her tether. And Jacques Cohen's Miss Havisham sets fire to the mouldered remains of her wedding day that never was.

First performed in 2012, Cohen himself shaped a libretto from the Dickens novel *Great Expectations*, in which the jilted Miss Havisham – the Lady from Satis House – manipulates the icily beautiful Estella and Pip, the young boy who unexpectedly becomes a gentleman, to work her revenge on faithless men. Accompanied by the Tippett String Quartet, Marie Vassilou's Miss Havisham is by returns angry, manipulative and hysterical in a fine display of vocal agility. And the quartet are required to stretch their instruments in unexpected directions, mostly percussive, while theirs is the last word as they mutter 'She ruined her life'.

Cohen's writing for string quartet is never less than confident, with knowing references to English music from Purcell to Handel and hints of folksong. The 11 scenes are effectively a set of variations although we never hear the melody on which they are based until a heart-stopping instrumental interlude before the final scene.

This recording includes a pair of Cohen's other works for string quartet. *From Behind Glass*, in which four instruments break out of their museum glass cases; and *When the Bough Breaks*, where the wind really rocks the cradle. There is menace in the second piece, marked *Misterioso*, with its icy strings. This is a composer much possessed by shadows. *Christopher Cook*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Paul Moravec

The Shining
Edward Parks, Kelly Kaduce et al; Lyric Opera of Kansas City/ Gerard Schwarz
Pentatone PTC 5187 036 105 mins (2 discs)

There is more than a touch of *Wozzeck* and *The Turn of the Screw* in this opera about mental breakdown, family violence and the malevolence of spirits from the past. Like Berg's and Britten's operas, *The Shining* is also based on

a literary source – Stephen King's 1977 novel of the same name, which was adapted as a film by Stanley Kubrick in 1980.

The opera received its premiere at Minnesota Opera in 2016, but this recording comes from a performance by Kansas Lyric Opera in March last year. It features baritone Edward Parks as Jack Torrance, soprano Kelly Kaduce as his wife Wendy (the role she created in 2016), and bass-baritone Aubrey Allicock as Dick Hallorann, the Overlook Hotel cook who shares their son Danny's psychic abilities. Mark Campbell's libretto stays close to King's novel and focuses more on the human drama rather than the horror. The role of Danny (taken here by Tristan Hallett) is for speaking voice, which misses the opportunity for more melodic, aria-style music. The real power of the music, though, lies in the orchestra. Moravec's score is richly effective – from the eery evocations of the supernatural at the start, to the lyrical, tender moments between the Torrances before Jack's madness takes hold.

Edward Parks gives a rounded and believable performance as Jack, while Kelly Kaduce starkly portrays Wendy's vulnerability and pain. Aubrey Allicock is a gentle, compassionate Hallorann. Conductor Gerard Schwarz keeps the orchestra on its toes, and there is some spookily effective singing from the chorus. The listening experience is slightly disturbed by on-stage noises and occasional laughter from the audience during the funnier moments – of which there are a few. *John-Pierre Joyce*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Kevin Puts
The Hours

Joyce DiDonato, Renée Fleming, Kelli O'Hara; The Metropolitan Opera/ Yannick Nézét-Séguin

Erato 5419791052 183:00 mins (2 discs)

The Hours is that rare kind of opera that packs a powerful punch both in the opera house and on the album. Based on the 1998 novel by Michael Cunningham (itself inspired by Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs Dalloway*) and the 2002 film, it holds its own as a powerful work of art, exploring issues of time, love and remembrance.

The opera had its stage premiere at the Metropolitan Opera in New York in November 2022, and the present recording – made during that initial run – features the original cast, including Renée Fleming as Clarissa Vaughan, Joyce DiDonato as Virginia Woolf and Kelli O'Hara as Laura Brown. Listening to it is an absorbing, even harrowing, experience. Greg Pierce's libretto is compelling, and the 20-odd scenes dissolve in and out of each other so effectively that it is possible to visualise the action without actually seeing it.

Puts's music is tonal, broadly melodic and full of striking orchestral detail. His writing for the three principal female voices – two sopranos (Fleming and O'Hara) and a mezzo (DiDonato) – is highly expressive. The music associated with each of the characters reflects their individual time and place: lean and spare for Woolf; ironic jazz-pop for Laura; evocative of Barber and Bernstein for Clarissa. There are also touches of minimalism (Philip Glass composed the score for the film version) that act like punctuation marks as the three women attempt to write, read and live through Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*.

A formidable trio: Kelli O'Hara, Renée Fleming and Joyce DiDonato star in Kevin Puts's *The Hours*

There are strong performances from the other singers, especially Kyle Ketelsen as Richard, and Brandon Cedel as Laura's husband, Dan. The chorus gives effective voice to inner monologues, and Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducts the Met orchestra with exceptional sensitivity. *John-Pierre Joyce*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Wagner
Das Rheingold (DVD)

Michael Volle (baritone) et al; Staatskapelle Berlin/Christian Thielemann; dir. Dmitri Tcherniakov

Unitel 809808 156 mins (2 DVD)

Filmed at the Staatsoper unter den Linden in October 2022, this first instalment of Dmitri Tcherniakov's Berlin *Ring* was to have been conducted by Daniel Barenboim, but illness removed him from the project and Christian Thielemann stepped in. In fact the musical aspects are very much the better factor.

Tcherniakov's vision of the piece feels reductive. The setting is a modern, supposedly top-secret research centre, whose laboratories, conference rooms and other suites operate on two separate levels in the gigantic set: this moves both up and down and side to side to allow us to see the members of the team at work alongside their researchers and test subjects, but more often in discussion over their project.

Judging from the opening scene where Alberich wears goggles and his visions are recorded on clipboards by the three Rhinemaidens, this may be concerned with virtual reality. But who knows?

Whatever project they are engaged upon, the extraordinary visual effects Wagner calls for and audiences regularly look forward to are dropped: Alberich's transformations into a giant serpent and a toad take place entirely within his imagination.

The piling of his golden hoard, firstly for Wotan and then for the giants, is similarly missing on a literal level. Many will feel shortchanged by both this and a dramatic narrative that seems to be about something not far from boardroom politics.

No complaints about the orchestral playing, even if Thielemann's view of the score is more lightweight and less dramatic than one might expect.

Broadly lyrical, meaningful singing from the cast, though Michael Volle's Wotan is past his best and Rolando Villazón's Loge doesn't cut the vocal mustard. *George Hall*

PERFORMANCE ★★
PICTURE & SOUND ★★★★

BACKGROUND TO...
Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*

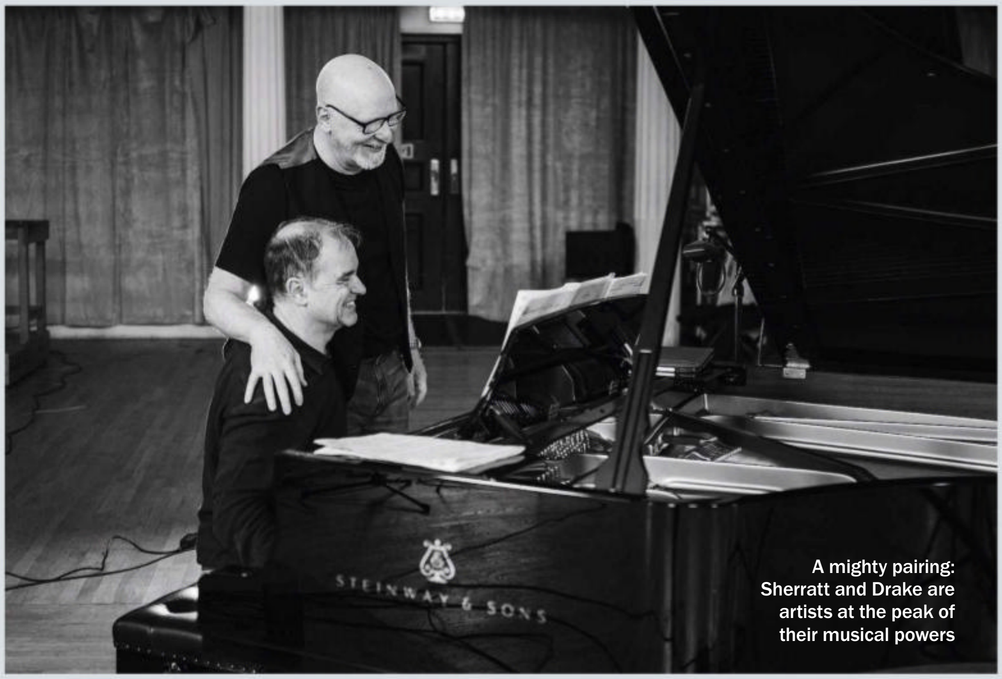
Gluck certainly wasn't the first to bring the story of Orpheus's journey to the underworld to the opera stage, but his take is probably the most famous. It caused a stir when it was premiered at Vienna's Burgtheater in October 1762, starring castrato Gaetano Guadagni in the title role, with audiences eventually won over by its emotional poignance and orchestral power. It broke many an operatic rule when it came to form, with Gluck relying on a chorus (a no-no at the time) and just three characters (instead of the usual six), not to mention a continuous orchestral presence. Gluck had another go at the story in 1774.

SIMON FOWLER, GETTY

CHORAL & SONG CHOICE

Brindley Sherratt's solo debut is one to savour

The British bass brings his sense of operatic lyricism to this set of soulful songs, says *Ashutosh Khandekar*



A mighty pairing: Sherratt and Drake are artists at the peak of their musical powers

FOXBRUSH, JAVIER SALAS

Fear No More

Songs by Schubert, Musorgsky, R Strauss, Ireland, Finzi, Head, Gurney and Warlock
Brindley Sherratt (bass), Julius Drake (piano)
Delphian DCD34313 58:20 mins

Brindley Sherratt has taken a slow-burn approach to what has turned into a stellar career in opera. In his late fifties, he has just released his debut solo recital recording, a collection of songs exploring notions of death, from the macabre to the consoling. Sherratt possesses that rare gift – a genuine bass voice that carries its lyrical, expressive clarity from its ringing high notes right down to a full-toned basso profundo delivered without a trace of muddiness.

The opening series of five songs by Schubert includes 'L'incanto degli occhi', a rare setting of an Italian text, in which Sherratt displays a characteristic operatic panache. Elsewhere, there is a lightness and flexibility that sounds positively youthful, culminating in a magnificent bottom D at the end of *Der Tod und das Mädchen*.

A centrepiece to the recital is Musorgsky's *Songs and Dances of Death*, which is full of tonal variety and colour, with Sherratt clearly relishing the nuances of the Russian language in these expressionistic songs. Throughout the recording, Sherratt's projection of text is exemplary, and that is especially so in the 20th-century English group that ends this album.

> Julius Drake's contribution is superb, sensitive to Sherratt's every dynamic shift

The title song, Finzi's 'Fear No More', is typical of the singer's approach as he relishes every fricative and plosive of Shakespeare's text while sustaining a generous, unfalteringly lyrical vocal line.

Pianist Julius Drake's contribution is superb, sensitive to every dynamic shift in the singer's performance. This is a true partnership of two experienced musicians at the peak of their powers.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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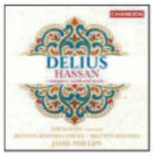
Delius

Hassan – Complete Incidental Music
Zeb Soanes (narrator); Britten Sinfonia Voices; Britten Sinfonia/ Jamie Phillips
Chandos CHAN20296 80:25 mins



Where to begin? This is the incidental music to *Hassan*, a 'poetic prose play' by James Elroy Flecker that recounts how its eponymous hero 'came to make the golden journey to Samarkand'. The score would prove one of the greatest successes of Delius's career, and the genesis of the production – in which a reluctant composer had to be persuaded to join by his wife – was both tangled and star-studded.

As Daniel M. Grimley observes in a liner note, the plot's double narrative was very much a product of the racial and class-based attitudes of its time, 'revelling in imaginary scenes of a despotic eastern court and its gruesomely barbaric practices'. Flecker's text drew on English translations of *One Thousand and One Nights*, and he was a passionate orientalist; Delius was attracted to the spirituality of his ideas. Moreover the production, which premiered in 1923, was heavily influenced by the Russianism fashionable at the time; the Ballets Russes choreographer Mikhail Fokine devised its dances, one of which was composed by Percy Grainger.

How seriously was it taken in its day? More to the point, how seriously can we take it now? After listening, I really can't say. The presiding omnipresence is that of a narrator – here, Zeb Soanes, whose voice will be familiar to Radio 4 listeners. Sometimes he puts on a BBC announcer's voice, other times he hams it up as a character in the story, revelling in its OTT exoticism: 'O thou villainous, unclean dog Selim. O thou unutterable woman. I will have you both whipped…'.

But the music itself, stylishly delivered by the Britten Sinfonia and its Voices, and full of echoes of Rimsky-Korsakov and other late 19th-century Russians, demands to be taken seriously. Dear reader, it's your call. *Michael Church*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

De Falla • Stravinsky

Stravinsky: Pulcinella Suite; Harpsichord Concerto; **De Falla:** El retablo de maese Pedro

Airam Hernández (tenor), Benjamin Alard (harpsichord) et al; Mahler Chamber Orchestra/ Pablo Heras-Casado

Harmonia Mundi HMM902653 62:07 mins

Stravinsky gets sole billing on the spine of the CD version of this album – beautifully presented as ever by Harmonia Mundi – but this is a triptych of equals, covering more than just neoclassicism (a term Stravinsky himself rejected).

An earlier sonic world surfaces in *El retablo de Maese Pedro* (Master Peter's Puppet Show), a hybrid one-acter on which de Falla was already working before Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* reached the stage. Without the visuals – and I've not seen it done since a young Rattle's South Bank summer festival in the 1980s – it needs the utmost vividness. And it gets it from the Mahler Chamber Orchestra under a fiery Pablo Heras-Casado at the start, with Airam Hernández as the puppetmaster, treble Héctor López de Ayala Uribe as the boy narrator (splendid patter) and José Antonio López as Don Quixote, unintentional wrecker (the incident is adapted from a scene in Cervantes's work).

Wanda Landowska played in the stage premiere, and de Falla wrote the Harpsichord Concerto (with its rather more opaque but still nimby scored treatments of traditional Spanish music) especially for her. Benjamin Alard sought out a powerful Pleyel in Granada, similar to the one constructed for her, and the recording spotlights its richness just perfectly.

The *Pulcinella Suite* is simply perfect, buoyant and stylish rather than in your face, with vivid personalities from leader William Hagen to first bassoon Marceau Lefèvre lending ideal sophistication. The only caveat is that we could have had the complete ballet, but this winning hour's worth of vivid entertainment will do nicely.

David Nice

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Hèle

Missa Praeter rerum seriem plus works by Manchicourt, Payen and Rogier

El León de Oro/Peter Phillips et al

Hyperion CDA68439 64:41 mins

Anchored by a first complete recording of Hèle's *Missa Praeter rerum seriem*, Peter Phillips's album delves into the Flemish 'capilla' created by Philip II of Spain to ensure a ready supply of rigorously conceived liturgical music. Deploying the nearly 40 voices of El León de Oro, Phillips surveys a less familiar aspect of a golden age dominated by Victoria and Guerrero. Figures such as Pierre de Manchicourt create a context for Hèle's Mass. And the latter, in turn, yields to the new fashions blowing in from Venice as embedded in Philippe Rogier's two-choir *Regina caeli* with its festive pitting of one choir against the other. Conducted by El León de Oro's founding director Marco Antonio García de Paz, its swaying bell-like introduction and penchant for high voices ensures an upbeat conclusion to a set often bathed in rich and dark-hued textures. Hèle's Mass, for example, is in seven (later eight) parts, and it takes its starting point not just from a much-plundered motet by Josquin, but also the latter's fondness for dark sonorities. Peter Phillips shapes it with scrupulous attention to the way in which detail is subsumed into the whole, and how the lines interact with each other. The well-upholstered choral sound is always focused if sometimes lacking in variety, and the Et resurrexit provokes a welcome sharpness of attack, while the Osanna in excelsis powers towards a particularly resonant climax. From Manchicourt's ravishingly luminous *Osculetur me* to the mellow soundworld of Payen's *Virgo prudentissima*, revelations abound.

Paul Riley

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

De Falla with Fire: conductor Pablo Heras-Casado's approach is blazing

Kozłowski

Requiem

Olga Peretyatko (soprano) et al; Singapore Symphony Orchestra/ Hans Graf

Pentatone PTC 5187 125 49 mins

A work by a forgotten composer, in memory of a figure little known outside Poland. Józef Kozłowski (1757 or 1759-1831) produced his Requiem in E flat minor for the state funeral of ex-King Stanisław August Poniatowski, which took place in St Petersburg's Catholic church of St Catherine on 25 February 1798. Stanisław II August had become King of Poland in 1765 but, due to successive partitions of his country and its eventual disappearance as an independent state, he abdicated in 1795 and thereafter remained a virtual prisoner at the Russian court.

The commission would have had special significance for Kozłowski – a Pole working in Russia – and he responded with a fine composition that had a second outing in expanded form in 1825 following the death of Tsar Alexander I (who was also King of Poland, and required a Latin Requiem in a Catholic setting). The original 1798 version is performed here.

Mozart's 1791 incomplete Requiem was a likely model for a piece in which Kozłowski remains loyal to the Classical style, which he handles with serious purpose. Sombre and dignified, ranging from the fear and fury of the Dies irae to the unusually troubled and distinctive Benedictus, and with many imaginative instrumental touches, the result is a distinguished piece of work.

Impressive soloists and a strong orchestral contribution under conductor Hans Graf; the choir makes a generally good showing but is occasionally challenged by the writing. The recorded sound, though, lacks a sense of space.

George Hall

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Victoria

Tenebrae Responsories

I Fagiolini/Robert Hollingworth

CORO COR16204 71:50 mins

I Fagiolini's new recording of Victoria's *Tenebrae Responsories* is interesting and noteworthy on several counts. Director Robert Hollingworth has eschewed convention and returned the work to the lower pitch intended by the composer, giving it a darker colouring befitting its title, its sombre Easter subject matter, and the literal dimming of lights that accompanied Tenebrae services in Victoria's time. Hollingworth also uses one voice per part, which enhances the expressivity of this exquisitely recorded performance,

creating a sense of intimate storytelling, particularly powerful in Nocturn III of the *Matins Responsories for Maundy Thursday*, where we hear the imploring voice of Christ himself. The vocal timbre Hollingworth has coaxed from his soloists is intensely pure and smooth, yet there is nothing pallid about this particular early-music sound – surges of passion abound.

The second novelty (available on the CD version only) is the decision to intersperse the work's 'Nocturns' (each a set of three Responsories) with affecting poems by the contemporary poet Christopher Reid about the death of his wife from cancer. Though interrupting the flow of the music might seem an oddity to some, the entire work would not have been performed in a single sitting. Introducing a present-day, secular text that dwells on how loss unexpectedly floors you as you go about your daily life illuminates the Easter story's universal message – and the way in which listeners might reflect on their own cares and dilemmas between the portions of the work. The result is highly moving, enhancing our appreciation of Victoria's music. Even the cover photo is a poignant choice: mirrored images of the Sycamore Gap encourage us to reflect on the sorrows of pointless loss.
Alexandra Wilson

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Rose in Bloom

Songs by Saint-Saëns, Rachmaninov, Brahms et al
Erin Morley (soprano), Gerald Martin Moore (piano)
Orchid Classics ORC100294 64:37 mins

If roses bloom in this debut recital recording from the American soprano Erin Morley, there are also daffodils, tulips, peonies, lilac and hollyhocks. It's less a garden than a plantsman's catalogue, with everything from nightingales to swallows to animate the view.

Not all of this repertoire suits Morley's voice, which is essentially a light lyric instrument with a silvery top that extends high above the stave. If she excels in Milhaud's gravity defying *Tais-toi Babillarde* and parades a dazzling coloratura in Saint-Saëns's vocalise *Le Rossignol et la Rose*, Brahms's *Lerchengesang* is too weighty and she never quite gets the measure of Zemlimsky's *Vöglein Schwermut*, with its avian messenger resting on the dark hand of death. And in both of Rachmaninov's songs you are conscious of a niggling burr in the middle of the voice.

At the heart of the album is the cycle *Huit Chansons de Fleurs*, by Ricky Ian Gordon. He's no slouch when it comes to picturing words in his music – so we have drunken bees teetering along the keyboard, a meandering piano part as Wordsworth wanders lonely as a cloud and a sassy quickstep for a setting of Dorothy Parker's mordant *One Perfect Rose*. Generally, however, the piano parts settle for rippling arpeggios, conversational riffs and melodies that doodle without clear direction.

It doesn't help that the pianist Gerald Martin Moore adopts an unduly reverential attitude to the music. At times he is positively languorous. Berg's *Die Nachtigall* all but drops off his branch while Novello's closing *We'll gather Lilacs* seems ready to gather wool.
Christopher Cook

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Passion and poignance: I Fagiolini are on exemplary form in Victoria

Schütz – *A German in Venice*

Works by Schutz, Cavalli et al
David de Winter (tenor); The Brook Street Band
First Hand FHR145 82:44 mins

Here is a well-thought-out programme. Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672) first visited Venice in about 1609, and again in the late 1620s. Travel was important to him, geographically and intellectually. What David de Winter and the Brook Street Band have assembled is a musical sequence reflecting the influence of Italian, and more specifically Venetian style on Schütz. His music provides the recording's leitmotif, with pieces by Monteverdi, Salamone Rossi, Giovanni Felice Sances, Cavalli and Grandi offering contrasts in colour, rhetoric and declamation.

All but one of the Schütz pieces come from his *Symphoniae sacrae* collections I and II, published in 1629 and 1647 respectively. While the earlier contained settings of Latin texts, the second features texts in German. Italian and central German traditions are frequently united, as in the 'Lobet den Herrn' with which de Winter begins his recital. From among a rich variety of solo vocal items, Cavalli's 'O quam suavis', from his *Motetti a voce solo* (1645), charms our senses while the Stabat Mater of Sances is arresting for its chromaticism over a tetrachord ostinato bass. Two trio sonatas by the Jewish composer Salamone Rossi provide a beguiling distraction from the programme's principal fare. The clearly defined and lively articulation of the Brook Street Band inform the music with irresistible allure. I hope these musicians will make further incursions into this neglected area of repertoire.

David de Winter sings with careful attention to texts, some of which, like Schütz's setting of Psalm 8, offer scope for descriptive declamation. While his intonation is impeccable, I sometimes found his *forte* passages a little hard-edged and unyielding. In addition to his accomplished singing, de Winter has contributed an elegantly written essay. *Nicholas Anderson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Show Me the Way

Songs by Beach, Price, Bonds, Sarah Kirkland Snider et al
Will Liverman (baritone), Jonathan King (piano)
Cedille CDR226 87:38 mins (2 discs)

This double album surveys American song by women. Bookended by jazz (an Ella Fitzgerald tune) and gospel ('If I can help somebody'), it includes songs by Florence Price and Margaret Bonds alongside more recent compositions, including two premiere recordings. The closing song is sung by baritone Will Liverman's mother and accompanied by him, in a wonderfully personal touch.

Not all the repertoire is equally convincing. Barnes's *Sable Jubilee* includes many attractive moments in its celebration of Black pride; 'Luxury' and 'Elevation' open well but then sprawl. Rene Orth's 'A Prayer' – a duet with mezzo-soprano J'Nai Bridges – similarly includes impressive and moving moments. Sarah Kirkland Snider's 'Everything That Ever Was' (with Renée Fleming) is deeply intimate but feels unfocused.

Price's songs are more economical. The *Songs to a Dark Virgin*, increasingly standard repertoire, is tremendous in Liverman's rich tones. Another standout is Bond's four settings of Edna St Vincent Millay. Beach's late-Romantic duet 'Ah, Love is a Jasmine Vine' from her rarely heard chamber opera *Cabildo*, is a treat, with soprano Nicole Cabell.

Sharply contrasted are Libby Larsen's faux-naïve, almost documentary songs of boyhood, *Machine Head*. These respond well to Liverman's pin-sharp, expressive diction. The closing eponymous 'Machine Head' works excellently, most especially its breathtaking final note.

One quibble about this otherwise impressive recording is that Liverman's glorious voice is occasionally too richly operatic for the song (for instance, Bonds's 'What Lips My Lips Have Kissed'). Another is that most of the contemporary numbers lean towards expansive, loose structures; a different selection might have worked better. But Liverman's voice is dazzling and King handles the often-dense accompaniments with architectural awareness, in a well-balanced recording. *Natasha Loges*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Vaughan Williams: Retrospect

In Windsor Forest; Violin Concerto*; Silent Noon; plus works by JS Bach

*Jack Liebeck (violin); London Choral Sinfonia/Michael Waldron et al

Orchid Classics ORC100289 58:51 mins

This album is a follow-up to *Colourise*, a 2022 release that featured alternatively scored versions of Vaughan Williams's *Five Mystical Songs* and *The Lark Ascending*. There's more off-piste VW in this new recording, including the seldom-aired *In Windsor Forest*, and five choral songs excerpted from his Falstaff opera *Sir John in Love*. Conductor Michael Waldron uses a version for strings and piano apparently unrecorded before now, and leads a freshly responsive performance where the lusty 'Drinking Song' and softly sensual 'Wedding Chorus' particularly catch the attention.

Also claimed as first recordings are arrangements of the song 'Silent Noon', and of the choral pieces 'Land of our Birth' and 'Nothing is here for tears'. Tenor Andrew Staples is the plangent soloist in 'Silent Noon', where the string accompaniment (written by Owain Park) adds both textural and expressive value. The two choral works showcase the unforced sensitivity of the London Choral Sinfonia, who skilfully avoid overheating the patriotism of Kipling's text for 'Land of our Birth', and the funerary heroics of Milton's 'Nothing is here for tears'.

Half a dozen other recordings of Vaughan Williams's Violin Concerto are currently available, but Jack Liebeck's new interpretation rates highly, not least for the precisely tailored contribution Waldron elicits from the string orchestra. Liebeck brings a stimulating elegance and agility to the angular opening movement, intelligently weaving in and out of VW's accompanimental textures, rather than constantly dominating.

Liebeck's relative restraint pays rich dividends in his poignant account of the *Adagio*, while in the *Presto* finale he is brilliantly mercurial without letting slip his clean attack or intonation. His playing is the highpoint of varied programme. *Terry Blain*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

MATTHEW BRODIE, GETTY

BACKGROUND TO... Vaughan Williams's *In Windsor Forest*

This charming five-part cantata finds its roots in Vaughan Williams's 1928 opera *Sir John in Love* (itself a take on Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*), the five pieces pulled directly from that score. The opera didn't receive its professional premiere until 1946, so that perhaps goes some way to understanding why this truncated selection came about, premiered as it was in 1931 at London's Queen's Hall. Shakespeare's original text looms large, of course, but Vaughan Williams drew on his contemporaries, including John Lyly and Thomas Campion.

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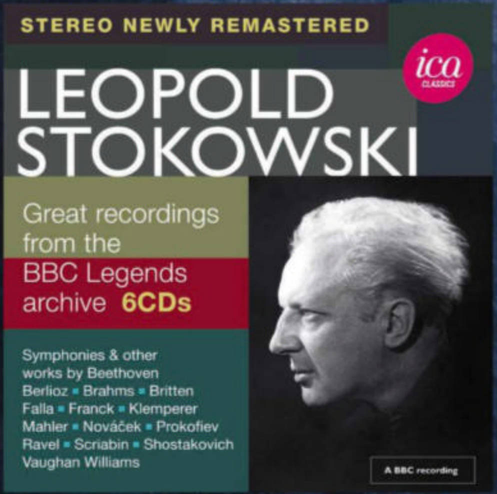

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Chamber

CHAMBER CHOICE

Virtuosic view of rare 'Hollywood' gems

Erik Levi **enjoys this imaginative showcase of concert works by film composers**

The Golden Age of Hollywood

Works by Korngold, Waxman, Herrmann, Rózsa et al
Patrick Savage (violin), Martin Cousin (piano)
Quartz QTZ2156 62:36 mins

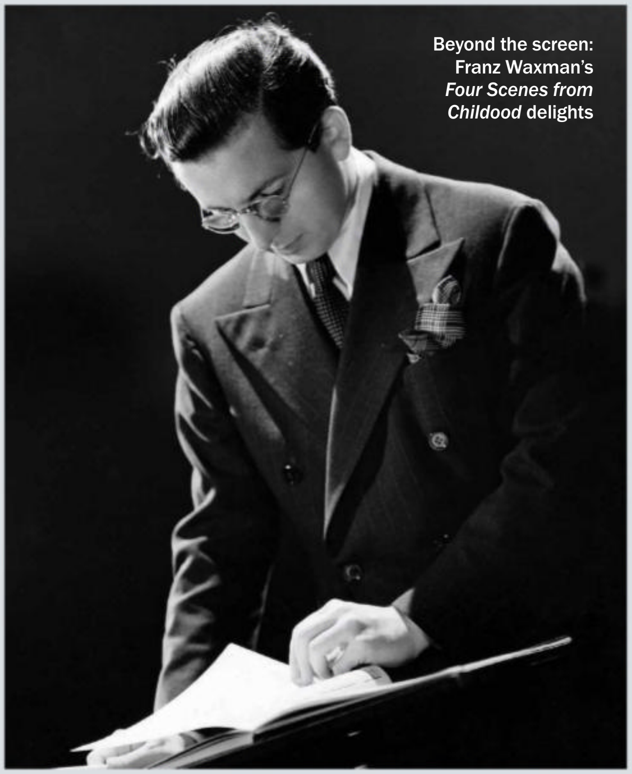
The range of composing talent that gravitated to Hollywood during the 1930s and '40s was truly exceptional. It included a number of musicians that were no less skilled at writing concert works as in creating effective scores for the burgeoning film industry. Yet at the time, achieving due recognition in both fields proved virtually impossible. Part of the reason for this must be linked to the snobbery of the American musical establishment which deemed that commercial success in film music meant that any other aspect of a composer's output could never be taken seriously.

Listening to this warmly recorded and imaginatively devised recital makes you realise the utter stupidity of such entrenched views, for the intrinsic qualities of the music featured here are self-evident. A wonderfully affectionate and strongly characterised performance of Korngold's *Much Ado about Nothing Suite* sets the ball rolling. It is followed by Bernard Herrmann's luxuriously perfumed *Pastoral* and Franz Waxman's delightful *Four Scenes of Childhood* – a cycle of four miniature pieces that encapsulates the daily activity of a young household in the most vivid manner.

> Savage and Cousin revel in the music's exuberant virtuosity

Robert Russell Bennett scores a real winner with his upbeat and slightly jazzy *Hexapoda*. In stark contrast, Jerome Moross evokes the wide-open prairies of the American Mid-West in his *Recitative and Aria*. The final item, Miklós Rózsa's *Variations on a Hungarian Peasant Song*, provides ample opportunity for Savage and Cousin to revel in the music's exuberant virtuosity. All in all, a hugely enjoyable release.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★



Beyond the screen: Franz Waxman's *Four Scenes from Childood* delights

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Beethoven

Violin Sonatas Nos 1, 6 & 8
Viktoria Mullova (violin), Alasdair Beatson (pianoforte)
Signum Classics SIGCD794 57:22 mins

Beethoven's three violin sonatas Op. 30, composed in 1802 and dedicated to Tsar Alexander I, have as their centrepiece a grandiose work in the composer's favourite dramatic key of C minor, but the smaller outer panels of the triptych – and especially the first of them – are less often heard. That opening sonata of the series is a largely intimate and subtle work, but it hadn't always been so: Beethoven originally wrote its finale as a whirlwind tarantella-like display piece, but he eventually transferred it to the 'Kreutzer' sonata Op. 47, where it sits, perhaps, more comfortably, and in its place he wrote a lyrical set of variations. The slow movement of Op. 30 No.1 features an expressive violin melody played against an accompaniment in a sharply 'dotted' rhythm. Alasdair Beatson, using a copy of an 1805 Viennese piano by Anton Walter, is a little forthright here, so that the music lacks the feeling of serenity it ought to impart, but he and Viktoria Mullova are more successful in the minuet-like middle movement of the sonata Op. 30 No. 3, where they find the ideal tempo and mood. And in the finale their dazzling playing captures all the music's wit and brilliance.

The remaining work here is Beethoven's First Violin Sonata, Op. 12 No. 1. Again, it's possible to feel that there's an element of grace and elegance missing from the almost Mozartian theme of the sonata's variation slow movement, where Beatson sounds just a shade matter-of-fact. All the same, he's undoubtedly a fine player, and in the sonata's outer movements both he and Mullova convey the full energy and quirkiness of the young Beethoven at his most provocatively original. *Misha Donat*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Biber

The Mystery Sonatas
Alan Choo (violin); Apollo's Fire/ Jeannette Sorrell
Avie AV2656 129 mins (2 discs)

Biber's *Mystery Sonatas* have become almost a Baroque violinist's rite of passage. In 1990 there were just three recordings available. Now there are at least 37, and counting.

The 15 sonatas and concluding *Passacaglia* provide a religious panorama illustrating events in the life of the Virgin. Though not strictly programme music, there are instances of depictive writing

like the trumpet intradas of the Ascension Sonata and the Easter chorale, played in octaves, of the Resurrection Sonata. Biber's manuscript and sonatas lack titles but each piece carries a copperplate engraving illustrating a key event in the Catholic devotion of the Rosary. Biber organised the sonatas, scored for violin and continuo, into Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries. The unaccompanied *Passacaglia* provides a meditative summary.

Only the opening Sonata and the *Passacaglia* call for standard violin string tuning. For the remaining pieces Biber requires scordatura or string retuning – this too should be considered integral to the concept of mystery – thereby enabling the performer to realise subtly varied colours. Alan Choo has overlooked little in matters of expressive fervour, conveying exuberance in the joyous 29 variations of the Assumption Sonata, while affectingly projecting the dissonant melancholy of the Sixth Sonata, the Agony in the Garden. Choo is also well served by a pleasingly colourful, if historically questionable continuo group variously featuring cello, viola da gamba, lirone, theorbo, Baroque guitar, archlute, triple harp, organ, percussion and harpsichord.

Performances of these pieces vary in the emphasis which they place upon extrovert gesture and inner thought. While there are many dance movements the music remains meditative and rich in symbolism. Choo has found a persuasive middle road with a satisfying result. *Nicholas Anderson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Farrenc

Clarinet Trio; Flute Trio etc
Maria Caturelli (flute), Livia Tancioni (clarinet), Livia de Romanis (cello), Michele Tozzetti (piano)
Da Vinci Classics C00859 51:21 mins

The still underrated Louise Farrenc is represented here by chamber music including piano, flute and clarinet, as well as two very enjoyable piano pieces. The flute was particularly close to her heart as her husband, Aristide Farrenc, was a distinguished performer and the couple had toured France together as a duo. Farrenc, herself a pupil of Moscheles and Hummel, must have been a seriously dazzling pianist, given the quicksilver way she writes for the instrument.

Mystery Man: Alan Choo (centre) offers a colourful take on Biber's sonatas

GETTY, NICHOLE FEHRMAN

She was a remarkably distinguished figure, breaking the mould in the mid- 19th-century as a woman with a chair of piano at the Paris Conservatoire, a music publishing firm together with Aristide, acclaim as a composer of symphonies and a bent for researching early music. Her compositional style was at odds with the prevailing fashions of her city, where grand opera reigned supreme; she preferred the abstract possibilities offered by early romantic German and Austrian music and sounds palpably more influenced by Weber and Schubert than by any French composer.

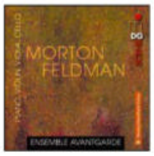
The booklet dates the two trios no more precisely than 'between 1839 and 1862', but they turn out to have been written in the mid-1850s. The trios are engaging, bright-spirited pieces that make substantial demands on their performers and the flautist and clarinettist, respectively Maria Caturelli and Livia Tancioni, do Farrenc proud.

Questions spring to mind, however, about what really constitutes original instruments and supposedly period-appropriate playing styles and how far these can be worthwhile. The pleasingly clear-textured piano playing from Michele Tozzetti is, for reasons unclear, on an 1899 Bechstein (yet Farrenc died in Paris in 1875), while the cellist, playing with minimal vibrato, sometimes sounds rather uncomfortable. *Jessica Duchen*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Feldman

Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello
Ensemble Avantgarde
MDG MDG61323092 77:40 mins



Just weeks before his untimely death from cancer, Morton Feldman (1926-87) produced what would be his final completed work, *Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello*. The title is as telling as it is unadorned: a love of instruments – and these four in particular – had always been central to his creative impulse. Always composing at the piano, in 1984 he had declared that 'instruments are the answer to the cul-de-sac, not ideas.'

In a sense, all Feldman's pieces are at root abstract homages to 'gorgeous' pitch, and its perception in relation to the senses and time. But *PVVC*, as it is often known, feels especially so in light of his own, fast-approaching end. Ensemble Avantgarde's sensitive performance, recorded in the unembellished acoustic of a concert hall, unfolds its beauty with a rapt, finely balanced combination of tension and calm.

Apparently stripped to essentials, the work glows with the trademark, subtle shifts in colour and timbre so redolent of Feldman's beloved Rothko on the one hand, and Anatolian rugs on the other: in effect, it emerges from his late preoccupation with scale and form as a last, impersonal yet highly personal musing on the nature of musical memory.

Hushed, sustained chords appear to repeat yet do not quite; never developing per se, yet slowly shifting and revolving over some 80, pulseless minutes, the harmonies now dissonant, now quasi-tonal – with no resolution but the fine-tuning of player and listener alike to a world of macroscopic wonder.

This is music demanding – and rewarding – of complete attention. It's open to debate whether the resonant piano quite meshes with the lightly foregrounded strings, but it's a thrilling debate to be able to have. *Steph Power*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Haydn • Hensel • Ligeti

Haydn: String Quartet Op. 20, No. 5; **Ligeti:** String Quartet No. 1 'Métamorphoses nocturnes'; **Hensel:** String Quartet in E flat major
Chaos String Quartet
Solo Musica SM457 67 mins

This is a somewhat curious assemblage of pieces, containing a work each from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, but as an illustration of the Chaos Quartet's versatility it will do nicely. Particularly successful is their account of the early Quartet No. 1 by Ligeti, where their stunningly accurate playing conveys all the music's wit and sarcasm, and its many abrupt changes of mood: a slow folk-like lament marked *mesto* (sad) at one moment, a dizzying *presto* the next. Above all, this sounds like a real performance, not just a studio concoction, and the players aren't afraid of letting us hear the discreet sound of them putting on and taking off their mutes.

Fanny Hensel's string quartet, composed in 1834, is something of a mixed bag. Its first two movements were adapted from an unfinished piano sonata she wrote some five years earlier, and when she sent the complete quartet to her brother, Mendelssohn, he complained that the music modulated so continually and so freely that it wasn't in any key

at all. In fact, only the brilliant finale is firmly in E flat major, and it's hard not to feel that this is the most successful movement of the four. The ecstatic violin tune that comes floating in shortly before the end is a moment well worth waiting for.

More familiar is the Quartet in F minor from Haydn's Op. 20 series. The Chaos Quartet conveys the expressive intensity of its broad opening movement admirably (Haydn's tempo marking here is *Moderato*), but an excess of emphatic downbeats in the slow movement's gentle siciliano-like melody makes it sound rather earthbound. Nevertheless, an impressive debut recording. *Misha Donat*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Impressive debut: the versatility of the Chaos String Quartet is on display

DAVIDE BERTUCCIO

Shostakovich

String Quartets Nos 9 & 15
Carducci Quartet
Signum Classics SIGCD786 59:54 mins

Here we find Shostakovich in the bloom of life and on the edge of death. The Ninth String Quartet of 1964 was dedicated to his third wife, of two years, Irina, and written at a time when, she later recalled, he was 'happy things were going well – not to be alone in this life, and that he felt safer'. It's hard to detect real optimism, even if the quartet is in the heroic key of E flat major, but it is filled with life force: edgy, angsty, playful, satirical and energetic – and marvellously captured in this sinewy, alert performance by the Carducci Quartet. Whether your attention is drawn to the unsettled opening murmurs or the spiky *William Tell* quotes, the Carduccis draw out the detail. The continual drive reaches its apex in the last movement, when they relish the fierce pizzicatos, dramatic tremolos and powerful cello soliloquy.

By the time of his 15th quartet, ten years later, ill health had taken over. The end was threateningly close. Sitting in the darkness of E flat minor, its six movements, all slow, include an 'Elegy', 'Funeral March', 'Nocturne' and an 'Epilogue'. Intense, sombre ideas circle and repeat, some are spare and forceful, yet others buzz and pierce. Getting under the skin of those strange moods, the music's own unsettling logic, is no mean feat, and it's here that the Carduccis' deep engagement with Shostakovich's quartets pays off. Not only is this the British ensemble's third album of his music; so immersed are they with this cycle that they once performed all 15 in one day. There are many other fine recordings of Shostakovich's quartets, but this one is well worth hearing. *Rebecca Franks*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Reflections

Rachmaninov: Sonata for Piano and Cello in G minor; **Ustvolskaya:** Grand Duet; **Arvo Pärt:** Spiegel im Spiegel
Kathrin Inbal-Bogensberger (cello), Tatiana Liakh (piano)
Hänssler Classic HC23070 66 mins

This release takes us on an intriguing journey from Rachmaninov's intoxicatingly romantic swerving melodies that propel you forward in shimmering velvet passages to the uncompromising brutality of Ustvolskaya's *Grand Duet*, where the grey Soviet concrete all but screams in defiance.

These accomplished performers certainly define this stylistic 'volte-face' with skill. However, the Rachmaninov boasts many fine recordings, and this one cannot be regarded as a benchmark. Part of the problem lies in the sound which deprives the lower registers of Inbal-Bogensberger's cello of richness and gives the piano tone an unnecessarily brittle edge in the more forceful passages. There are also issues with this interpretation which needs more obvious contouring of phrases in the first movement, and greater degrees of contrast between repeated phrases, in terms of dynamics and characterisation. Similar concerns feature in the ensuing *Allegro Scherzando*, where a more vivid sense of playfulness would generate greater differentiation with the more reflective lyrical sections.

Ustvolskaya's *Grand Duet* is far more successful. The performers seem better attuned to the music's violent mode of expression and revel in its extremes of register and compressed fury. At the same time, Inbal-Bogensberger and Liakh don't quite capture the magnetic and breathtakingly numb eloquence achieved by Rostropovich and Alexei Lubimov in their shattering Warner Classics recording.

Arvo Pärt's *Spiegel im Spiegl* plays on the album's title of *Reflections*, and the beguiling stillness of this work is an effective foil for the romantic exuberance of Rachmaninov and gritty angularity of Ustvolskaya. At the same time, other versions that boast a more generous recording quality are even more beautiful in terms of timbre. *Jo Talbot*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

She Composes Like a Man

Works by Bacewicz, Smyth, L Boulanger et al
Tine Thing Helseth (trumpet) et al
LAWO Classics LWC1280 51:50 mins

There's something both enraging and wryly humorous about this album title, which quotes a review of the redoubtable Ethel Smyth. But this collation of music by women, arranged for all-female brass ensemble, makes a still-relevant point about gender equality. Indeed, there is plenty of thought here, for instance a number from Smyth's late oratorio *The Prison* which includes the (here unsung but deeply symbolic) words 'we are full of immortality'.

Politics aside, the repertoire is often tremendous fun, balancing lyricism and drama, humour, dance, the old (early Romantic) and the new, as well as the 'serious' and 'folk'. The sequencing is as skilful as the carefully voiced performances.

Some pieces seem made for brass, such as Bacewicz's rousing *Oberek* and *Mazovian Dance*. But Lili Boulanger's translucent *Deux Morceaux* are transformed, the 'Cortège' with a circus-like humour.

Price's dignified *Adoration* – itself arranged by her for different instrumentations – is perfectly balanced by *Share my yoke*, a Salvation Army melody of Joy Webb, as well as Beamish's tranquil *In the Stillness*. Similarly, Fanny Mendelssohn's 'Schwanenlied', appealing pieces by Backer Grøndahl and two by Clara Schumann lend a Romantic warmth. Bonis's *La Toute Petite s'endort* is a hypnotic ending.

But who would expect a *Sicilienne* by Schubert's contemporary von Paradis to sound so convincing for brass dectet, or that the ordered chaos of Crawford Seeger's *Rissolty Rossolty* would follow it so well?

The album convincingly refutes the still-heard charge that women did not write for certain instrumental combinations by forging its own solutions. These arrangements should be published. Not every piece works perfectly, but overall, there is much to enjoy. *Natasha Loges*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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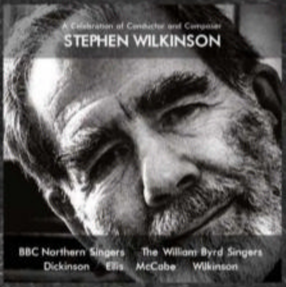

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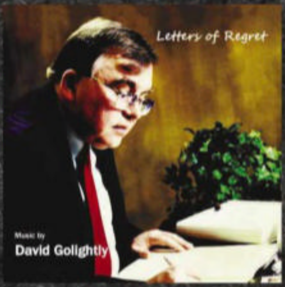

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INSTRUMENTAL CHOICE

Alluring works from a fearless fiddler

Michael Jameson **is left spellbound by violinist Fenella Humphreys's *Prism***

Prism

Works by C Scott, Maxwell Davies, Caroline Shaw et al
Fenella Humphreys (violin)
Rubicon RCD1127 76:30 mins

There's simply no hiding place with solo violin repertoire. Every vulnerability is exposed to scrutiny, and so much the more when the repertoire itself is largely unfamiliar. Fenella Humphreys is masterful, however, bringing playing of constant allure and vitality to this album which, as she explains, 'grew out of a longing to keep performing music that I was gifted, arranged or first discovered during the spring of 2020.'

> This is a hugely accomplished release, vibrantly performed

As lockdown retrospective releases go, this is the most diverting and imaginative I've yet heard. And while these offerings may well be personal avowals rather than obvious audience pleasers, the best of them, particularly Jessie Montgomery's Rhapsody No. 1, certainly deserve wider currency. Caroline Shaw's *In manus tuas*, loosely derived from an eponymous Tallis motet, is just as mesmerising, and both receive richly atmospheric and visionary performances here.

There are already more transcriptions of Bach's D minor Toccata and Fugue BWV 565 than you can shake the proverbial stick at, but Humphreys's version astutely curates more of Bach's original than most – easily matching the heft and rhetorical gravitas of Bruce Fox-Lefriche's over-worked violin arrangement, indeed the one you're most likely to hear performed these days.

I also enjoyed Humphreys's disarmingly idiomatic playing in works by Satie and Debussy, again heard in her own very pleasing transcriptions. This is a hugely accomplished release, fearlessly and vibrantly performed, and superbly engineered too. Definitely worth a punt, even if you feel this repertoire might not be entirely for you.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Reflecting on 2020: Fenella Humphreys's programme finds it roots in Lockdown

MATTHEW JOHNSON

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JS Bach

Sonatas & Partitas, BWV 1001-1006
Franz Halász (guitar)
BIS BIS-2705 131:00 mins (2 discs)

Guitarist Franz Halász is no stranger to Bach: having recorded the Lute Suites in 2019, he now tackles the celebrated Sonatas and Partitas, originally for solo violin. Based on his own highly idiomatic arrangements, these accounts invert the traditional order of the paired works, so that the freer, dance-inspired partitas act as multi-movement 'preludes' to the more abstract, often fugal sonatas. The result is surprisingly effective.

Halász also takes liberties in his approach to rhythm, which he treats with considerable freedom. The effects are for the most part expressive, occasionally erratic – although he never loses sight of the music's underlying architecture. Bach's lines are beautifully moulded and weighted; his melodies sing and resonate in the church acoustic, highlighting the polyphonic conception of these works. Embellishments, too, are stylish.

Bach's fugues and fast movements don't always sit comfortably on the guitar, but Halász nonetheless despatches them with virtuosic ease. The instrument comes into its own, though, in the slow movements and dances: among the many highlights are Halász's pensive and pliant reading of the *Allemande* of the B minor Partita; the yearning *Siciliano* of the G minor Sonata, and the A minor work's *Grave* – a baroque lament-cum-blues. The monumental D minor Chaconne also transposes well: its arpeggiations recall the *style brisé* of Baroque lutenists, and the guitar's natural resonance builds up a sonorous polyphonic edifice.

Halász plays a 1930s guitar by Hermann Hauser from which he draws kaleidoscopic colours and timbres, conjuring up the sounds of a lute or theorbo, a clavichord, a harpsichord, even a bagpipe. Sceptics of Bach on the guitar will surely be converted.
Kate Bolton-Porciatti

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Brahms

Gesänge Op. 3; Gedichte Op. 19; Lieder Op. 46 etc (arr. Reger)
Rudolf Buchbinder (piano)
DG 486 4842 58 mins

Reger's piano transcriptions are rarely heard. Nor, for that matter, is his original music for the instrument; he seems to be a difficult 'sell'. That's not to lessen the quality of his writing when it

does reach the limelight. Brahms was among the composer's chief influences, and in his piano transcriptions of Brahms songs, Reger treats the music with respect and care. He doesn't tamper with the originals, but renders them as faithfully as possible on one instrument minus singer. To do otherwise, he said, would be 'an unheard-of act of vandalism'.

Yet while these transcriptions tell us something of Reger's love for Brahms, they are perhaps less fulfilling as a listening experience. Brahms's songs are his most intimate and personal works, and he infused every word of the settings with poetic nuance. That does not come over so readily without the actual words, and of course part of the challenge facing any performer is to make sure that it does.

Rudolf Buchbinder approaches playing the transcriptions with the same care that Reger must have taken to make them; the interpretations sound, however, if not exactly perfunctory, then often somewhat one-sided. The voicing is clearly wrought, but there's a certain matter-of-factness that proves unsatisfying in such masterpieces of *innigkeit* as the 'Sapphische Ode', 'Immer leiser' or 'Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht'. Rapt, intense, introspective, these songs crack your heart open when performed by a singer whose tone truly inhabits their poetry. Here, while Buchbinder's effort and dedication is admirable, it is difficult not to long for a touch and phrasing that speaks with more insight into the songs' individual meanings. *Jessica Duchen*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Franck

Major organ works: Fantaisie Op. 16; Grande Pièce Symphonique Op. 17 etc
Miklós Teleki (organ)
Hungaroton HCD 32888-89 147:16 mins (2 discs)

Perceptions of Franck's organ output are curious. There is near unanimous acceptance among organists that the 12 pieces set out on this new recording from Miklós Teleki are 'the major organ works'. They were written in three sets handily spanning Franck's compositional maturity, starting with the *Six Pièces* (1859–62), followed by the *Three Pièces* of 1878 and the *Trois Chorals* from the months before his death in 1890. Understandably, they are widely performed and recorded, but it remains a puzzle why organists are sniffy about the more than 100 other pieces, including real gems, that Franck wrote for the instrument.

Regardless, a fresh perspective is always welcome on the big 12, and few are fresher sonically than this as Teleki's chosen venue, the Church of the Holy Spirit in the Hungarian town of Veresegyház, was only built in 2016. Frustratingly, the spartan booklet omits information about the new instrument, which was built in the nearby town of Dunakeszi. Leaner than a Cavaillé-Coll organ, it has plenty of power and warmth where needed, though the basic pedal sound is on the woolly side.

Teleki demonstrates a clear structural command of Franck's music. He tends towards the brisker end of the spectrum, which makes sense in an acoustic that is less resonant than most Parisian churches. Greater shape would be welcome at times, the walking theme in the opening section of the 'Grand Pièce Symphonique' being a touch pedestrian, possessing movement, but too little direction. Nonetheless, these are fine performances, though take note that this is effectively now a digital-only release, CD copies of the two-disc set already selling-out by the time of reviewing.
Christopher Dingle

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Bax & Chung:
Debussy and Ravel for Two

Debussy: Petite suite; En blanc et noir; **Ravel:** La valse; Ma mère l'oye
Alessio Bax, Lucille Chung (piano)
Signum Classics SIGCD787 73:57 mins

This is all about pairings. Works for two pianists by a pair of French composers, Debussy and Ravel, are performed by the husband-and-wife partnership of Alessio Bax and Lucille Chung. The album is built around two substantive works from each composer. Ravel's *Ma mère l'oye* and a two-piano arrangement of *La valse* sit alongside works from either end of Debussy's creative life: the *Petite suite* and *En blanc et noir*.

Bold in Bach: Franz Halász finds creative freedom in Sonatas & Partitas

Bax and Chung combine clean articulation and vigour with a warm palette of sound. The swirling eddies of the *Petite suite*'s 'En bateau' are wonderfully limpid, the *Scherzando* from *En blanc et noir* scrunches along with insouciant verve and *La valse* swirls to its conclusion with aplomb. Nor are they afraid to experiment, giving greater emphasis to the lower voices in the central section of the 'Laideronnette' in *Ma mère l'oye*, emphasising its inspiration from Javanese gamelan. While the playing is beautiful, taking a little more time would periodically be welcome so that, rather than striding purposefully through, it is possible to enjoy the full shimmering wonder of Ravel's fairy garden.

What marks this album out are the four Debussy favourites heard in less familiar guise, arrangements where another composer has added their perspective. Léon Roques's duet versions of *La fille aux cheveux de lin* and the nonchalantly sultry slow waltz *La plus que lente* enrich the colours, while the additions of Dutilleux's refined two-piano treatment of *Clair de lune* are sensed more than heard. Unsurprisingly, Ravel's imaginative approach to capturing the essence of *Prélude a l'après-midi d'un faune* in duet form is especially revelatory, a highlight in a thoroughly enjoyable album.
Christopher Dingle

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Kuniko Plays Reich II

Steve Reich: Four Organs; Piano Phase; Nagoya Marimbas; Mallet Quartet (arr. Kuniko)
Kuniko (percussion)
Linn Records CKD712 55:13 mins

In 1948, John Cage wrote, 'We may recognise what may be called perhaps a new contemporary awareness of form: it is static, rather than progressive in character.' Twenty years later, Steve Reich would come to embody key aspects of that awareness, with epoch-making results still profoundly felt today.

Kuniko's second album devoted to Reich's music continues her solo homage through multitracked arrangements – made in consultation with the composer – of works spanning some four decades. It's an illuminating, flawlessly performed survey of two halves: the first, rich with the vibrant freshness of his early process work, and the second no less driven or clear, but arguably less compelling in his subsequent take-up of more traditional elements of melody and harmony.

Earliest is 1967's *Piano Phase*, in Kuniko's brilliant 2021 version for two vibraphones. A landmark of New York minimalism, its looping patterns joyfully phase-shift in and

out of tempo synchronicity, realising perfectly the composer's quest 'to hear the [formal] process happening throughout the sounding music.'

Equally exciting, *Four Organs* (1970) is rare for the time in eschewing phasing, but the gradual, asymmetric lengthening of its single chord above a crisp maracas pulse brings its implied harmonies thrillingly alive.

The 2009 Mallet Quartet feels slighter, notwithstanding its more frequent, sometimes abrupt, changes and the melodic imperative which sites two vibraphones alongside two five-octave marimbas. Here and in the virtuosic *Nagoya Marimbas* (1994), the material is propulsive – and the canons typically inventive – but the appeal is ultimately more surface. *Steph Power*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

La Muse Oubliée II

Works by Nadia Boulanger, Cécile Chaminade, Florence Price et al
Antonio Oyarzabal (piano)
IBS Classical IBS32024 71:27 mins

The forgotten muses of Antonio Oyarzabal's album are not people (often women) who have inspired artists (often men), as the word often now commonly means. Instead, he's reclaiming the word's ancient Greek sense, meaning a powerful goddess. Here, that translates musically into 18 female composers, whose creative gifts have historically been undervalued and overlooked. It's the second volume in the Spanish pianist's project – and as artistically rewarding as the first, with a programme that voyages around countries and centuries, yet never feels like a hotchpotch.

The journey begins with the atmospheric *Wet Night on the Highway*, by the Australian Miriam Hyde; the landscape provides further welcome inspiration to Marion Bauer in her *From the New Hampshire Woods* of 1920, three pieces of real musical substance. The less familiar names keep on coming: the so-called 'Gershwin Girl', Dana Suesse, takes us into a 1930s jazz-infused world with *American Nocturne*, while it's the turn not of Clara Wieck (later Schumann), but her sister Marie Wieck, in a virtuosic 19th-century keyboard study.

La muse oubliée is winningly programmed: tart-edged Nadia Boulanger segues into the lyrical ease (and stormy turbulence) of her French compatriot Cécile Chaminade; the stark beauty of Ljubica Marić's *Pesma i Igra* is soothed by Otilie Suková's lilting *Ukolébavka* (Lullaby). And the lovely liner notes trace the historical connections between composers (Marić studied with Josef Suk, who was married to Sukova, herself the daughter of Dvořák, for instance.) Oyarzabal's performances are sensitive, thoughtful and lively, showing off the variety of his chosen repertoire. *Rebecca Franks*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Music in Time of War

Debussy: 12 Etudes; Chansons de Bilitis; En blanc et noir etc; **Komitas:** Armenian Dances for piano; Armenian Songs
Kirill Gerstein (piano) et al
Myrios MYR905 141 mins (2 discs)

Why tie these composers together? They greatly admired each other's work, but their respective oeuvres could not have been more different. For Kirill Gerstein, the connecting link is the fact that both were emotionally shattered by the implosion of their worlds; for Debussy by the First World War, and for Komitas by the Armenian Genocide.

The Debussyan side of this collection mixes the familiar with music that is seldom performed. Notable here are the two-piano version of *En blanc et noir*, for which Gerstein drafts in Thomas Adès as co-pianist, and some other late pieces which would have pointed in new directions, had the composer not been felled by cancer – the tentative *Elégie* and the *Étude retrouvée* are prime examples.

But the real thrust of this album lies in its championing of Armenia's musical patron saint Komitas Vardapet, who single-handedly founded an Armenian musical tradition through collecting his country's folk songs, and making choral and instrumental magic out of them. Komitas wrote very few piano pieces, and Gerstein plays them with love. But they are defiantly thin in texture: it's only with Komitas's

Emotional ties: Kirill Gerstein pairs works by Debussy and Komitas

MARCO BORGGREVE

folk-song settings that we get a sense of his magic, thanks to the beauty and heart-rending power of Ruzan Mantashyan's performances.

Gerstein spent the pandemic modestly chairing online debates in which other artists held the floor; in this attached booklet he prints essays by leading musicologists giving the background to Komitas's heroic – and ultimately tragic – life and work. But something vital is lacking here: to get the full force of the songs we need translations of their lyrics. Myrios should send these out via a link to their website. At present they are missing a trick. *Michael Church*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

(ré)inventions à Deux Pianos

JS Bach: 15 two-part inventions (arr. Chiahu Lee)
Yulia Vershinina-Mukhopadhyay, Chiahu Lee (pianos)
Divine Art DDV24172 28 mins

Bach was explicit about his motivation in composing the two-part *Inventions*. They were to encourage the ability to play in two parts clearly, to cultivate a cantabile style, and to stimulate a taste for composition. The Vershinina/Lee duo has certainly taken him at his word. Their counterpoint is lucidly articulated; their cantabile, compelling; and Chiahu Lee has picked up the compositional gauntlet by expanding the originals to four hands, two keyboards and, most radically, deploying a style that leans on 'pop, minimalism, and smooth jazz'. Then again, upscaling Bach is in the DNA. The duo made its debut playing Rheinberger's arrangement of the *Goldberg Variations* – to which *(ré)inventions à Deux Pianos* is perhaps a full-on, funky postscript.

The C major emerges as a kaleidoscopic concatenation of notes pulsating with glittering energy, a shimmering toccata enveloping Bach's original, while the C minor affords a sumptuous, thoughtful contrast. Perching itself on a cocktail bar stool, the D minor Invention sagely watches the world go by, and it's followed by the quivering bundle of artful joy that is its E flat sibling. Occasionally Chiahu Lee backs her reimagining into a harmonic corner from which the only escape is a tad clunky, and an easy reliance on pedal notes can sometimes seem like an imaginative shortcut; there's a deal of fertile re-invention to ambush the ear. Pearly arabesques lend a swirl of luxury to the potentially austere E major Invention; the G minor entices an unexpected tattoo of percussion effects, while the B flat dances on a pinhead. All in all, an invigorating and beguiling spring clean for the ears! *Paul Riley*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

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Screen

Michael Beek highlights some recent releases of music from film and television

SCREEN CHOICE

A glorious resurrection

Classic songs saved from the 20th Century-Fox trash heap are revived for this stunning album

A bygone sound: Clare Teal's voice is so perfect for this cherished repertoire

GETTY

State Fair and the 20th Century-Fox Songbook

Clare Teal, Scarlett Strallen, Derek Greten-Harrison et al (vocals); BBC Concert Orchestra/ David Charles Abell

Dutton Epoch 2CDLX 7408 (CD/SACD)
132:53 mins (2-discs)

This album marks the culmination of a years-long labour of love for musicologist (and featured singer) Derek Greten-Harrison, who has given new life to some of Hollywood's most beloved standards. The once great 20th Century-Fox studio was home to a stall of some of America's finest composers, songwriters and arrangers, who churned out musical jewels for films both memorable and distinctly not. That the orchestral parts for the likes of Rodgers & Hammerstein's original 1945 film musical *State Fair* and hits such as 'You'll Never Know', 'Three Coins in the Fountain' and 'You Make Me Feel So Young' no longer existed was a travesty, though thankfully the original manuscripts on which those parts were built *did* survive so that Greten-Harrison could begin painstakingly rebuilding performable orchestral scores. The BBC Concert Orchestra, under David Charles Abell, give John Wilson and co. a run for their money here, delivering sparkling readings. Clare Teal and Greten-Harrison's honeyed vocals seem from a bygone age and just perfect for this material, while the chameleon-like Scarlett Strallen fizzes and bubbles throughout. A trove of Golden Age treasures, all gloriously recorded. ★★★★★

June round-up

Deutsche Grammophon seems devoted to ***John Williams***'s every move. Following albums of his first visits to Vienna and Berlin comes ***John Williams in Tokyo***. Last year's trip wasn't his first, but the occasion with the late Seiji Ozawa's Saito Kinen Orchestra is worth a listen, not least of all for the ensemble's pristine performances, which exude a beautiful efficiency. DG's forthcoming (August) Blu-ray and CD releases will include the whole concert, with a first half conducted by Stéphane Denève, while this digital album largely features the Williams-conducted second half. That's a small shame as his 1993 piece *Sound the Bells!*, written as a wedding present for Japan's then Princess Masako (and premiered during his 1993 visit) was in the first half. I'd wait till August. *(DG 651 5029)* ★★★★

The First Omen is a prequel to 1976's *The Omen*, Richard Donner's sublime horror about the birth of the Antichrist in the form of a child. This film sets out the dastardly plan to bring about his birth, and the best thing about it is surely the music by Canadian composer ***Mark Korven***. I've been a fan of Korven's twisted soundscapes since his breakout folk-horror score for *The Witch* (2015). So this devilry is right up his street, and mine, with a downright unsettling orchestral-vocal palette featuring everything from throat singing to screams and whispers. Brilliantly inventive. *(Hollywood Records)* ★★★★★

Rather less scary, ***Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire*** is the latest instalment in the revived franchise about a team of neighbourhood ghostbusters (think Rentokil for ghosts). Oscar-winning British composer ***Dario Marianelli*** has a good track record for franchise efforts, with *Paddington 2* and Transformers spin-off *Bumblebee* under his belt, and here he takes the late, great Elmer Bernstein's original 1984 *Ghostbusters* soundworld and runs with it. Like Berntsein, Marianelli employs the sound of the Ondes Martenot (performed here by Cynthia Millar), and while the legacy music stands tall, the composer manages to add his own evocative stamp when called for – the track 'Ionic Separator' is a highlight in that regard. *(Sony Classical 19658894892)* ★★★★

Director Steven Zaillian's monochromatic ***Ripley*** is masterfully paced and brilliantly cast. Indeed the new eight-part adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr Ripley* is by far one of this year's most bingeable Netflix series. American composer ***Jeff Russo*** sets just the right tone with his orchestral score, adding some colour with moments of buoyant instrumentation. There's a subtle flamboyance in his main theme for Tom, while Russo underlines the excuciating game of cat and mouse with moments of opressive tension. It's a delicious soundworld. *(Netflix Music)* ★★★★★

The music of ***Ravel*** is at the heart of ***Boléro***, a new film charting the story behind what is undoubtedly the composer's most famous work. Directed by *Coco Before Chanel*'s Anne Fontaine, it's all very beautiful and full to the brim with music, performed by some of Warner's most esteemed current and legacy artists. Pianist Alexandre Tharaud looms large; indeed, he served as hand double for close-up shots of actor Raphaël Personnaz (Ravel) playing the piano, and even plays music critic Pierre Lalo in the film. While the titular centrepiece is robustly performed for the film by the Brussels Phil under Dirk Brossé, it's the wider 'Best Of Ravel' selection which captivates most. *(Warner Classics 5419795416)* ★★★

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CRUISE
COLLECTIVE

Brief notes

This month's choices include Moonwalkers, Magnificats and Music of the Night

Jeff Beal New York Études
Jeff Beal (piano)
Platoon Music PLAT22759

Composed in 2021, these ten meditative miniatures have at their heart a precision and focus characteristic of the work of *House of Cards* composer Beal – whose music-making has also had a positive impact on his Multiple Sclerosis diagnosis. But modest and understated exteriors are a front for harmonically ambitious textures, making this a thoroughly stimulating album. (CS) ★★★★

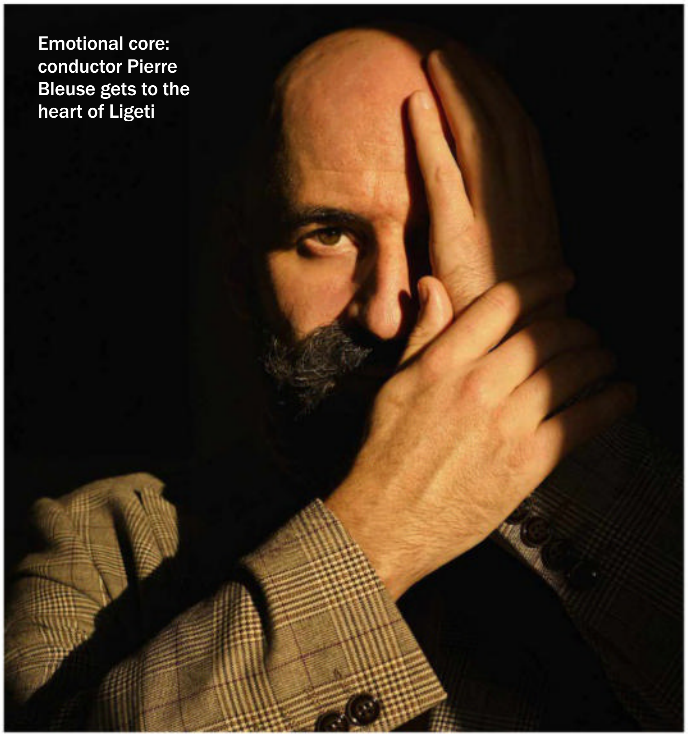
Brahms String Quartets; Romanze, Op. 118
Quatuor Agate
Appassionato APP003

Brahms proves a delightful showcase for Quatuor Agate in their debut recording. Although formed in 2016, this youthful ensemble's sound and musical impulses are anything but – there's a maturity to the string tone that lends itself particularly well to Brahms's darker timbres, and a sense that the quartet feels the music as one. (CS) ★★★★

Bruckner Erinnerung – Bruckner in St Florian
St Florianer Sängerknaben/ Markus Stumpner
Solo Musica SM450

Though Bruckner's symphonies will doubtless dominate his bicentenary celebrations, here's a timely reminder of his considerable skills as a composer for voices and the keyboard, presented by the choir in which he himself sang. The boys' singing is by no means immaculate, but they make up for it in sheer brio, and there's a brief stellar contribution from countertenor Alois Mühlbacher. (JP) ★★★

Monica Houghton A Breath of Air: American Art Song
Andrew White (baritone), Andrea Chenoweth Wells (soprano) et al
Navona NV6607



Emotional core: conductor Pierre Bleuse gets to the heart of Ligeti

Composer Monica Houghton has selected and arranged a raft of American poems traversing a wide thematic landscape (from whale bones found on the seabed to a gypsy's never-fulfilled prediction), and from the pens of both past masters (Whitman, Dickinson) and contemporaries (Elizabeth Bradfield, Maggie Anderson). Soloists including baritone Andrew White and soprano Andrea Chenoweth Wells cross this eclectic terrain convincingly. (SW) ★★★

Lacombe Horn Concerto; Symphony No. 2 etc
Peter Francomb (horn), Victor Sangiorgio (piano); BBC Concert Orchestra/Martin Yates
Dutton Epoch CDLX 7413

There's a lot to like, if not be blown away by, here, including a Suite for Piano and Orchestra that reminds one a little of Lacombe's contemporary Saint-Saëns but without quite the same magic sparkle. The following Horn Concerto and Symphony No. 2 both amble along amiably – don't expect to be taken to the emotional abyss; do enjoy what is nonetheless a pleasant ride. (JP) ★★★

Ligeti Concertos
Ensemble Intercontemporain/ Pierre Bleuse
Alpha Classics ALPHA993

New director Pierre Bleuse brings together chamber music and the Violin, Cello and Piano Concertos of Ligeti – a composer Ensemble Intercontemporain has championed throughout its lifetime. The playing by soloists Hae-Sun Kang, Renaud Déjardin and Dimitri Vassilakis is very fine – cutting through the composer's unsettling dissonances and electric-current drones to the emotional core. (CS) ★★★★

Manu Martin Lim Fantasy of Companionship Suite
Mark Bebbington (piano); Royal Philharmonic Orchestra et al
Signum Classics SIGCD858

This chamber orchestra suite is taken from of a longer work that explores connections between humanity and inanimate objects, via the tale of a toy lion who craves connection. The music itself mixes classical tonality and cogency with modern textures and a sense of the ineffable. Mark Bebbington's liquid pianism lends this story of awakening and connection all the awe and joy it requires. (SW) ★★★

Anne Nikitin The Moonwalkers
London Bulgarian Choir; RPO et al
Silva Screen Records SILCD1759

Written to accompany the Tom Hanks-narrated show running in London's Lightroom until 13 October 2024, this atmospheric score rises to the spectacular heights of its subject matter. The music is at once epic and ethereal, in which a great melting pot of styles and instruments come together to celebrate past and future space missions. (CS) ★★★★

Clive Osgood Magnificat
Amy Carson (soprano); London Mozart Players/Robert Lewis
Convivium CR093

A companion piece to Bach's Magnificat, BWV 243, Clive Osgood's work follows a similar structure and emotional journey, couched in contemporary jazz and Latin-fused tonalities and rhythms. The opening movement sets out the composer's grand intentions, but the more modest movements, such as the Quia respexit are the most affecting. (CS) ★★★

After Hours Works by Debussy, R Strauss, Dvořák, Weill et al
Fauré Quartett
Berlin Classics LC06203

This attractive album celebrates the encore – that 'counterpoint', 'fulfilment' and sometime-'highlight' of a performance. Featuring clever

arrangements of classics by Debussy, Strauss and Dvořák alongside new works, the compilation proves that it is possible – even rewarding – to fill a programme with desserts. And in Jarkko Riihimäki's *Last 11 Years* the group shimmers and soars in flexible tonalities. (CS) ★★★★

Lumen Christi A Sequence of Music for the Easter Vigil
The Choir of Westminster Cathedral/ Simon Johnson
Ad Fontes AF012

From the sombre opening Gregorian chant to Langlais's dazzling *Incantation pour un jour saint* for organ at the close, this darkness-to-light sequence for Easter Vigil is packed with atmosphere. Music ranges from the Renaissance masters such as Lassus and Victoria to composers associated with Westminster Cathedral in the present day, interspersed with plainchant, much of it accompanied. (JP) ★★★★

Ode to Lost Time Works by Ysaÿe, Debussy, Franck and Chausson
Miriam Davis (violin), Michael Bulychev-Okser (piano)
Convivium CR091

You would expect an album of works from Marcel Proust's *fin-de-siècle* Parisian soundworld to be rich in suggestion, atmosphere and sensuousness, and so it proves to be. Ysaÿe's *Poème Elégiaque* sighs and swoops; Franck's beautiful Violin Sonata is by turns fragile, passionate, desolate and joyous. Miriam Davis's violin is songful, Michael Bulychev-Okser's piano always a sympathetic partner in dialogue. (SW) ★★★★

Polish Piano Quintets Works by Lasón, Bargielski et al
Silesian Quartet et al
CD Accord ACD332

Harmonically adventurous, often atonal chamber music from six contemporary Polish composers. Standouts range from Aleksander Lasón's Chamber Music No. 1, which achieves an astonishing mix of serenity and turbulence (shades of Schnittke), via Zygmunt Krauze's yearning, lyrical and complex Piano Quintet to Bettina

Polished finish: the Fauré Quartett shares a programme of delightful encores

Skrzypczak's Quintet of 2021, composed during the pandemic and coming across as an aural journey through that unsettling period. (SW) ★★★★

SAGA Works by Nielsen, Debussy, Lalo Schifrin, Kevin Beavers
ARUNDOSquintett
Audite 97.812

Debussy's *Petite Suite*, here in wind quintet arrangement, drips with nostalgia – both explicitly in the idylls of the first movement 'En bateau', and implicitly in the final movements' Baroque flavours. The ARUNDOSquintett's mellow, insinuating playing brings these moods deliciously to life. Elsewhere, Nielsen's Wind Quintet finds the composer in gracious, almost Mozartean form, while in Kevin Beavers's Quintet the players tease out the woodwind family's more skittish qualities. (SW) ★★★★★

Trailblazers Works by Bosmans, Smyth and Pejačević
Molly Gebrian (viola), Danny Holt (piano) *Acis Productions 54162*

Three viola sonatas by women who defied the social conventions of their time: Henriëtte Bosmans (openly queer), Ethel Smyth (Suffragette leader) and Dora Pejačević (rejected her nobility in favour of music and social change). Unsurprising, then, to hear immense drama, turbulence and energy radiating from the three scores. Violist Molly Gebrian and pianist Danny Holt lend the music all the passion and conviction it requires. (SW) ★★★★

Voyage Organ works by Widor, JS Bach, Franck, Brahms et al
Jean-Baptiste Monnot (organ)
Base2 Music Base2 012

The title refers to the 'L'Orgue du Voyage', a nimble-sounding transportable instrument on which Jean-Baptiste Monnot plays five pieces of JS Bach with clarity and precision. Elsewhere – more Bach, Brahms, Franck, Widor and Jacob Purches – we get to luxuriate in the multi-hued sound of Saint-Ouen, Rouen's mighty Cavaillé-Coll organ. (JP) ★★★★

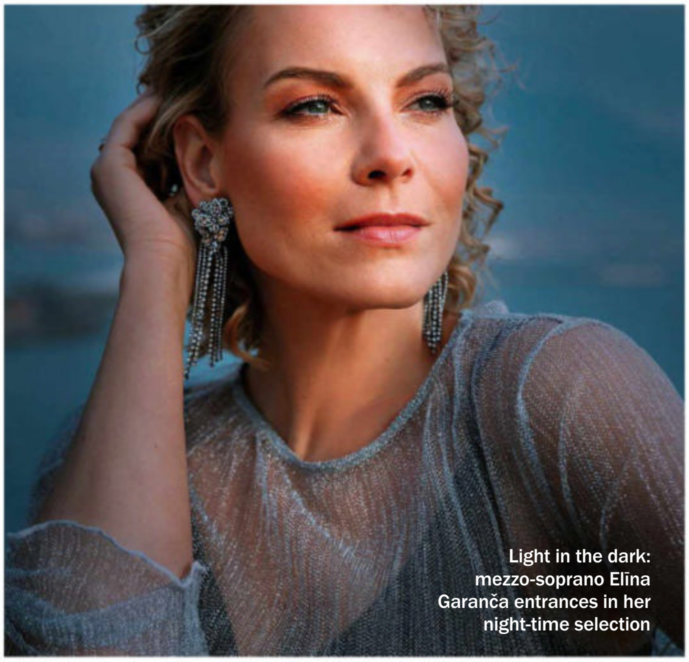
When Night Falls Songs by Berio, R Strauss, De Falla et al
Elīna Garanča (mezzo-soprano) et al; Orquesta Filarmonica de Gran Canaria
DG 486 4809

Though it ushers the listener into the darkest hours, this is not an album to drop off to. Whether in familiar lullaby territory by Brahms and Humperdinck, or serenading with, say, De Falla or her fellow Latvian Imants Kalniņš, Elīna Garanča is a welcome nocturnal companion. A whisky beckons. (JP) ★★★★★

Works by Female Composers Works by Helen Caddick, Sílvia Lanao, Chloe Knibbs et al
Lilith Ensemble
Lorelt LNT148

Lilith Ensemble is a flexible chamber group that adapts its membership to suit the music in hand, which it does to great effect in this album of many moods and colours. Sílvia Lanao's *Elgdans*, for instance, creeps sinuously around the bass clef; woodwinds of different hues conjure up images of a vast, empty landscape in Mary Jane Leach's *Whirlwind*; and Odaline de la Martínez's *Cuban Dances* do pretty much what you'd expect. (JP) ★★★★

Jeremy Pound (JP), Charlotte Smith (CS), Steve Wright (SW)



Light in the dark: mezzo-soprano Elīna Garanča entrances in her night-time selection

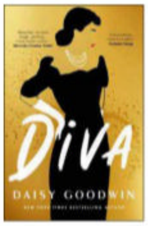
MARINE PIERROT DETRY, TIM KLOCKNER, SARAH KATHARINA

Books

Our critics cast their eyes over the latest selection of books on all things music

Diva
Daisy Goodwin
Bloomsbury 416pp (hb) £18

Fictionalising the biography of a real-life person can be tricky, the obligation to respect historical truth potentially impeding creative freedom. But Daisy Goodwin has embraced the task with gusto, scrupulously researching Maria Callas's life and vividly recreating the opera world of the 1950s and '60s.



It is the diva's love life that is at the heart of this book: her marriage to the ponderous Meneghini and her obsession with the sleazy, opportunistic Onassis, the latter particularly convincingly depicted. Goodwin doesn't shy away from a racy sex scene and is particularly adept at getting inside Callas's jealous mind as Onassis lets her down time and again. Having her imagine her lover's leering expression as she stabs Tito Gobbi's Scarpia in the famous 1964 London production is a delicious twist.

Readers might feel some small frustration that the book ends hastily, our heroine's ousting by Jackie Kennedy somewhat glossed over. But Goodwin has created a real page turner, full of sumptuous descriptions of food, diamonds, dresses, and beautiful Mediterranean locations, with walk-on roles from a host of famous cameos. A jewel box of delights.
Alexandra Wilson ★★★★

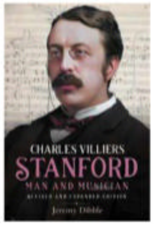
Charles Villiers Stanford – Man and Musician
(Revised and expanded edition)
Jeremy Dibble
Boydell 730pp (hb) £70

Good reasons are needed for reviewing a revised volume and Jeremy Dibble amply provides them. The original (OUP, 2002) was already a very substantial achievement, establishing a three-dimensional profile of someone easily overshadowed by the likes of Elgar and Vaughan Williams. This revision has involved what close

Love or obsession: Maria Callas's affair with Aristotle Onassis inspires a good read

GETTY

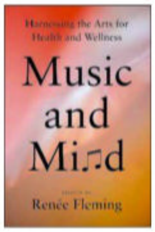
observation indicates is a word-by-word re-assessment of the main text, with even fatter appendices suggesting further Stanfordian explorations. But within and far beyond that, amounts of newly uncovered material significantly add to the book's length, not least - fascinatingly - in the area of opera. Dibble's reference to Stanford having a 'towering position' in British music is evidenced by the sheer range of his activities beyond the familiar composer/teacher roles. The densely detailed prose (for one thing, Dibble knows the music inside-out) is leavened by the energy and enthusiasm projected. Perhaps only devotees will devour this end-to-end, but as with its predecessor, there's huge value in this as a work of reference on many subjects. May CVS Mk II encourage still more listenings to Stanford's vast compositional output.



Andrew Green ★★★★★

Music and Mind
Ed. Renée Fleming
Viking Press 464pp (hb) £32.99

It's a sad irony that during a period when arts funding in the UK is being stripped right back, a whole field of research into the physical and mental health benefits of music is flourishing. If your gut reaction is that music is a vital part of human life, both in good and ill health, that's being borne out by scientific research and real-world studies – as showcased in this doorstop guide.



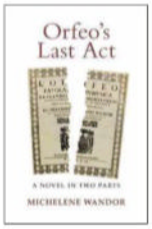
Featuring over 40 essays from a range of neuroscientists, medical professionals, musicians and artists, all given the curatorial seal of approval by soprano and advocate Renée Fleming, *Music and Mind* is a fascinating and authoritative guide to a subject that's packed with tantalising mysteries. What are the origins of our species' strong affinity for music? What do we mean by musicality? How can dance help people with Parkinson's and how can music improve life with Multiple Sclerosis?

Fleming has recruited leading experts – from psychologist and neuroscientist Daniel Levitin to novelist and opera convert Ann Patchett – to pose, explore and in some cases answer these questions. There is much more research to do and the book ends with a hopeful look to the future of 'NeuroArts', in which it's standard practice to use the arts to promote health and well-being. *Rebecca Franks* ★★★★

Orfeo's Last Act
Michelene Wandor
Greenwich Exchange 264pp (pb) £14.99

In late Renaissance Italy, the musician Salamone Rossi dodges racial persecution. In 21st-century Britain, Emilia, a dodgy academic, ventures into an early music course. Salamone joins his colleagues Claudio and Alessandro in creating a new final act for *L'Orfeo*. Centuries later, Emilia finds the manuscript. And nothing is what it seems.

There's another complication: the two stories unfurl simultaneously, one on the left, one on the right; it's up to the reader how to manage this. That's fine, as subtle inter-reflections between the stories tie them together; there's plenty of humour too, from the early music scene's idealisation of a Golden Age that was really full of plague, filth and exploitation, to the vivid characterisation of Jacopo Peri.

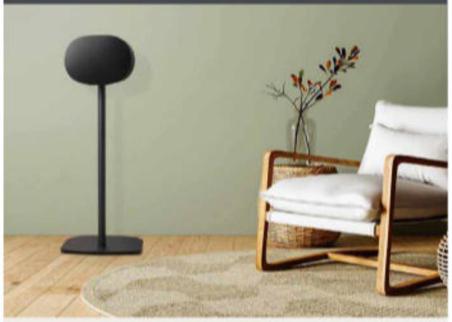


A few questions dangle, some over the passage of time, others about the chosen angles (more of Monteverdi himself would have been nice), but Wandor's gorgeous, sculpted style sets this book apart. She is a poet and her prose sings too. The descriptions of Mantua's ducal palace or the Florence Duomo feel as if you're living them; and she captures expertly the magic of being part of a performance. She even left me wanting to learn the viol. That's a first. *Jessica Duchen* ★★★★

Our expert *Chris Haslam* gives valuable advice on buying and using your hi-fi

How to position speakers for the best results

We recommend...



Stream away: the Mountson Sonos Era 300

Mountson Sonos Era 300 £119

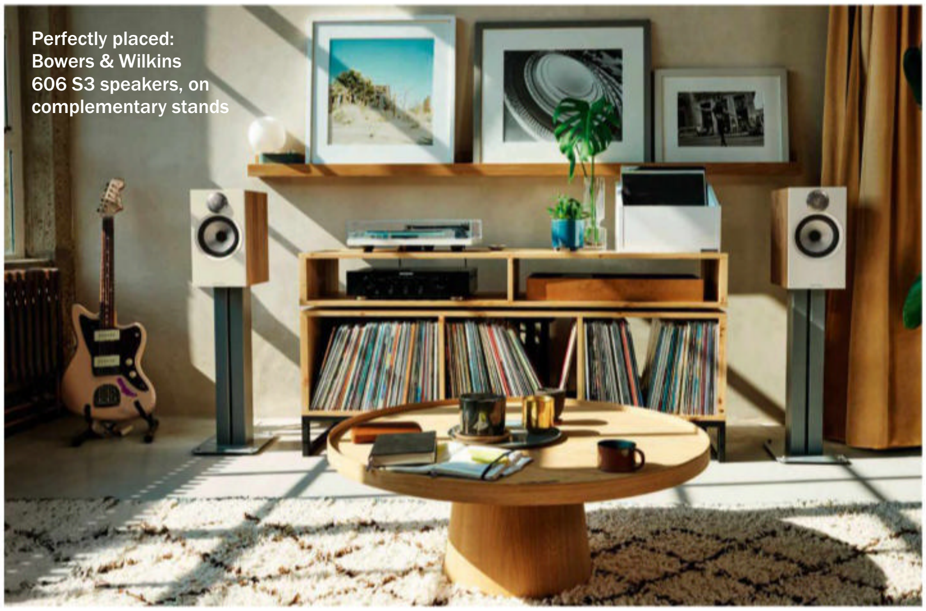
Adding stands to streaming speakers allows you to position them perfectly, rather than settle for any available space. These, designed for the Sonos Era 300, are made from high-grade steel, sit the speaker at an ideal listening height and come with a slot for hiding the cable and rubber feet for secure placement with minimal vibrations. **mountson.co.uk**

Atacama Apollo Cyclone Speaker Stands £129

Atacama's new Cyclone series has a solid oak base that reduces resonance, and a 50.8mm fillable stem for even greater protection from vibration. Available in three heights, the top plate is a generous 150 x 200mm – ideal for many brand speakers. **atacama-audio.co.uk**

Q Acoustics Tensegrity Stand £699

Made from aluminium tubes and thin stainless steel cables, the Tensegrity is an entirely new approach to speaker stands. Convention states they shouldn't work, but the lightweight, exceptionally rigid structure has a tiny surface area which reduces sound transfer to almost nothing. **qacoustics.co.uk**



Perfectly placed: Bowers & Wilkins 606 S3 speakers, on complementary stands

I was once emailed by a reader disappointed by the sound of a pair of bookshelf speakers I'd recommended. Surprised, I asked him to send me a photo of his hi-fi setup. His expensive new speakers were tucked into the corners of a huge living room and flanked by expansive glass doors. He'd bought the right speakers, but without careful positioning and stands, he'd neglected the basics.

The layout of your room will have a big impact on where you can place your speakers. If it's long and narrow, you may need to position them closer together to avoid sound reflections off the walls. In a wide room, the opposite is true, and wider placement will produce a more expansive soundstage. Where you'll be listening also makes a huge difference. Those wanting a dedicated listening room should aim to create an equilateral triangle between the speakers (with a wall behind them) and your listening position. For those in the real world, angling the speakers inwards towards your favourite chair offers a happy compromise.

'Reflective and smooth surfaces, like windows and walls, are generally worse than busy surfaces for sound,' explains Tony Stott, head of brand for Cambridge Audio. 'I might have terrible sound in the day, but if I'm listening in the evening, I've drawn my nice thick curtains – it absorbs the sound more.'

> 'Reflective and smooth surfaces are generally worse for sound'

Placing your speakers close to the back wall will give you more bass. Too close, however, and things will sound muddy, especially if they are tucked in the corner – avoid this if you can. But with bookshelf and standmount speakers, the most significant upgrade you can give them is a dedicated stand. This will help eliminate resonance and distortion, while also firing audio towards your ears. Take advantage of the floor spikes included (this goes for floorstanding designs too) as they decouple the speakers from the floor, helping to minimise the transfer of vibrations, which can cloud audio quality.

Most speaker brands offer stands to complement their core product ranges, and while often more expensive than third-party designs, they're seamless and specifically designed for the speaker size and power. For third-party designs, your local hi-fi specialist will also be able to advise. And while it sounds far-fetched, many audiophiles swear by filling their speaker stand bases to further eliminate unwanted vibrations, which also makes them more stable. High density inert filler is available from **atacama-audio.co.uk**, but dry play sand is also fine.

From the archives

Andrew McGregor looks over this month's reissued and live archive recordings

ARCHIVE CHOICE

Masterful Mozart duos

Rachel Podger and Gary Cooper deliver a vital collection of sonatas for violin and keyboard

Sparring partners: Cooper and Podger play as if deep in conversation

Mozart

Complete Sonatas for Keyboard and Violin
Rachel Podger (violin), Gary Cooper (fortepiano, harpsichord)
Channel Classics CCSBOX7824 (8-discs)

Between Bach's great solo violin works and Beethoven's celebrated Violin Sonatas, Mozart's 36 Sonatas for Keyboard and Violin are often overlooked. When we think of Mozart the performer, we imagine him at the keyboard – but from his earliest years he'd also played the violin, and perhaps it takes performances as imaginative as these from Rachel Podger and Gary Cooper to reveal the personality behind the keys and Köchel numbers. No nicknames to help us navigate, but listening to these two masters of their period instruments – and Cooper plays both fortepiano and harpsichord across the series – is to realise that much of this music is more profound, more musically satisfying than we might have thought. Compared to fine duos of the past – Perlman and Barenboim, Goldberg and Lupu – the quality of conversation changes completely. Listening to Podger and Cooper is like eavesdropping on the verbal sparring of two great friends, filled with intimacies, reminiscences, humour, spontaneity and flights of fancy. Mozart springs more fully to life, and you'll be astonished by the immediacy with which he communicates. A vital set. ★★★★★

June round-up

Under-recorded and under-appreciated? That's the title of the essay that accompanies conductor ***William Steinberg***'s complete ***RCA Victor Recordings with the Boston Symphony Orchestra***. Steinberg was made music director in 1969, but this former assistant to Toscanini and Klemperer wasn't seen as such a 'star' conductor, and RCA let the contract lapse after just a few recordings. Schubert's 'Great' C major Symphony, with exultant finale, and a Bruckner 6 whose propulsive vigour is seriously impressive are both new to disc, while the showpieces from Dukas to Stravinsky are colourfully entertaining. *(Sony Classical)* ★★★

This could be one of the more ear-opening series for ***Bruckner***'s 200th birthday: archival rarities remastered by Lani Spahr from the collection of the Bruckner Society of America. ***Volume 1*** is early 1860s Bruckner, a lively performance of the F minor 'Study' Symphony from the Bruckner Orchestra Linz under Kurt Wöss in the '70s, to a bristling, energetic account of the Symphony No. 1 from the Bavarian Radio Symphony and Eugen Jochum, an off-air recording on New Year's Day 1959. The earliest work is the String Quartet in a German radio recording from 1951, a passionate performance after the world premiere given by the Koeckert Quartet. *(SOMM)* ★★★

When was the first attempt to record ***Bach's Brandenburg Concertos*** 'in accordance with Baroque tradition', as the notes put it here? Earlier than we might think, it turns out, and with the Berlin Philharmonic in the 1930s. *Brandenburg* 3 had been recorded a couple of times – easy to get the small string group near the acoustic horn – then in 1930 Furtwängler and the Berliners gave it the big band approach, with a heavy-footed exuberance that's strangely appealing. Alois Melichar conducted the other five *Brandenburgs*, slow, steady, a little lighter than Furtwängler, but with none of the sense of grace and air you'd expect from today's period specialists. Historically fascinating nevertheless. *(Danacord)* ★★

More live ***Radu Lupu***, the great Romanian pianist, in BBC broadcasts from the Aldeburgh Festival early in his career in 1970 and '71, the year after winning the Leeds International Piano Competition. Two Mozart Sonatas first, played with singing legato (and some vocalising), some leisurely speeds but always with great expressive beauty. Brisk, engaging Haydn, and two Schubert Sonatas with the inner radiance and soulful passion we know from Lupu's later studio recordings. Bartók's *Out of Doors* is a gleefully percussive contrast. Outstanding documents, mostly decent recorded sound. *(Doremi)* ★★★★

At his best – and it's a very high bar – ***Paul Lewis*** is able to reach some of the sublime peaks of Lupu's playing, but he also offers clarity and immediacy, and sometimes a rugged fearlessness that goes directly to the heart of Schubert's piano writing. It's taken Lewis some 20 years to record the complete Sonatas, *Wanderer Fantasy*, *Moments Musicaux* and Impromptus, and this is some of the finest modern Schubert playing, full of character and yet self-effacing. A treasurable survey at full price, a bargain in this budget reissue. *(Harmonia Mundi)* ★★★★★

Andrew McGregor is the presenter of Radio 3's *Record Review*, broadcast each Saturday afternoon from 2pm-4pm

A memorable tenure: Antonio Pappano's time at Santa Cecilia gave us thrilling recordings

GETTY, DR

Unboxed

This month's round-up celebrates three great conductors: Pappano, Marriner and Brüggen

Released ahead of his 65th birthday, ***Antonio Pappano: The Complete Warner Symphonic Recordings*** (*Warner Classics*) is a generous recorded survey of the conductor's celebrated tenure at the helm of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. This 27-disc collection takes in Pappano's acclaimed symphonic, concertante and sacred music recordings with the orchestra, and features notable soloists like Joyce DiDonato, Anna Netrebko, Beatrice Rana and Martha Argerich. It's a remarkable overview of Pappano's 18-year (2005-23) creative partnership with the Italian ensemble and features ravishing performances including Verdi's Requiem, Rossini's Stabat Mater and Saint-Saëns's *Carnival of the Animals*, plus works by Tchaikovsky and Respighi, and the first release of their reading of Bruckner's Symphony No. 8. Not to be missed.

Handel-Marriner: The Decca Legacy (*Eloquence*) is another cherishable survey of a conductor and ensemble partnership, this time focusing wholly on a single composer. Neville Marriner and his Academy of St Martin in the Fields orchestra put the music of Handel front and centre, delivering benchmark recordings over a period of decades. This 19-disc set brings together, for the first time, all of their albums for Decca (including those for Philips, Argo and L'Oiseau-Lyre) made from 1961-97. While it is a comprehensive account of Handel's orchestral works, peppered throughout are wonderful choral, operatic and vocal offerings, including the *Coronation Anthems*, *Messiah*, *Jephtha* and *Acis and Galatea*. There are sublime solo turns from Robert Tear, Elly Ameling, Emma Kirkby and Dmitri Hvorostovsky, to name but a few.

Frans Brüggen and the Orchestra of the 18th Century had a penchant for Mozart and in ***A Life With Mozart*** (*Glossa*) we are treated to their complete recordings of Wolfgang's music for the Glossa label. Across nine discs, we encounter Mozart in his many guises, from arias (featuring Joyce DiDonato and Cyndia Sieden) to the late symphonies, via the Requiem, Sinfonia Concertante and works for violin, horn and oboe. The offering may be fairly run of the mill, but the performances are anything but, with Brüggen and the ensemble on glittering form in what are mostly live recordings, captured between 1998 and 2010. ***Michael Beek***

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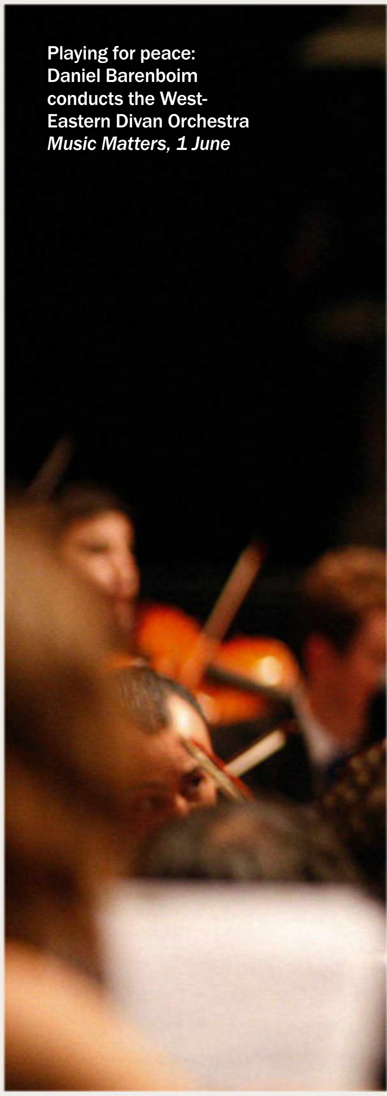
TV&Radio

Your guide to what's on BBC Radio 3 this month, plus TV highlights



Playing for peace: Daniel Barenboim conducts the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra *Music Matters, 1 June*

JUNE'S RADIO 3 LISTINGS

Schedules may be subject to alteration. For up-to-date listings see BBC Sounds and iPlayer

Three to look out for

Suffolk sounds: Benjamin Britten in Aldeburgh, 1949

Sam Jackson, the controller of BBC Radio 3, selects three programme highlights for the month of June

Bridging the gap

The third episode of Clemency Burton-Hill's six-part series celebrating Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said's brainchild – an orchestra where Arabs and Israeli young musicians play alongside each other – features new and archive interviews.
Music Matters: West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, 1 June, 1pm

A Musical Carousel

Roll up, roll up to BBC Maida Vale Studio 1, where singer and presenter Clare Teal joins conductor Gavin Sutherland and the BBC Concert Orchestra for a fairground-themed programme, with music from Battersea Park to Las Vegas.
Friday Night is Music Night, 7 June, 7.30pm

Inspiring Britten

Tom Service brings his new *Saturday Morning* show to the 75th Aldeburgh Festival, introducing the music, sounds and places that captured the imagination of the festival's founder, Benjamin Britten. Tom is joined live by special guests and musicians to focus on this year's event and to tell the stories of Snape Maltings and Aldeburgh since its inception in 1948.
Saturday Morning, 15 June, 9am

1 SATURDAY

6.30-9am **Saturday Breakfast**
9am-12noon **Saturday Morning**
12-1pm **Earlier... with Jools Holland**
CHOICE 1-2pm **Music Matters** West-Eastern Divan Orchestra
2-4pm **Record Review**
4-5pm **Sound of Cinema**
5-6pm **This Classical Life** trumpeter Matilda Lloyd
6-9.30pm **Opera on 3** live from Royal Opera House. Vivaldi *L'Olimpiade*
9.30-10.30pm **Music Planet**
10.30pm-12.30am **New Music Show**

2 SUNDAY

6.30-9am **Sunday Breakfast**
9am-12pm **Sunday Morning**
12-1.30pm **Private Passions**
1.30-3pm **Sunday Afternoon**
3-4pm **Choral Evensong**
4-5pm **Jazz Record Requests**
5-6pm **The Early Music Show**
6-7.15pm **Words and Music**
7.15-8pm **Sunday Feature**
8-10pm **Drama on 3**
10-11.30pm **Night Tracks**
11.30pm-12.30am **Unclassified**

3 MONDAY

6.30-9.30am **Breakfast**
9.30am-1pm **Essential Classics**
1-2pm **Live from Wigmore Hall**
2-4pm **Classical Live**
4-5pm **Composer of the Week** Amanda Maier-Röntgen
5-7pm **In Tune**
7-7.30pm **Classical Mixtape**
7.30-9.45pm **Radio 3 In Concert** from Barbican, London. Musorgsky *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Garcia *Missa de Santa Cecilia (UK premiere)*. BBC Symphony Chorus, BBC Symphony Orchestra/Martyn Brabbins
9.45-10pm **The Essay**
10-11.30pm **Night Tracks**
11.30pm-12.30am **'Round Midnight**

4 TUESDAY

6.30-9.30am **Breakfast**
9.30am-1pm **Essential Classics**
1-4pm **Classical Live**
4-5pm **Composer of the Week** Amanda Maier-Röntgen
5-7pm **In Tune**
7-7.30pm **Classical Mixtape**
7.30-9.45pm **Radio 3 In Concert**
9.45-10pm **The Essay**
10-11.30pm **Night Tracks**
11.30pm-12.30am **'Round Midnight**

5 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9.30am **Breakfast**
9.30am-1pm **Essential Classics**
1-3pm **Classical Live**
3-4pm **Choral Evensong**
4-5pm **Composer of the Week** Amanda Maier-Röntgen
5-7pm **In Tune**
7-7.30pm **Classical Mixtape**
7.30-9.45pm **Radio 3 In Concert** from Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. Strauss *Emperor Waltz*, Berg *Violin Concerto*, Strauss *Blue Danube Waltz*, Beethoven *Symphony No.7*. Josef Špaček (violin), BBC Philharmonic/Anja Bihlmaier
9.45-10pm **The Essay**
10-11.30pm **Night Tracks**
11.30pm-12.30am **'Round Midnight**

6 THURSDAY

6.30-9.30am **Breakfast**
9.30am-1pm **Essential Classics**
1-4pm **Classical Live**
4-5pm **Composer of the Week** Amanda Maier-Röntgen
5-7pm **In Tune**
7-7.30pm **Classical Mixtape**
7.30-9.45pm **Radio 3 In Concert** live from Royal Festival Hall, London. Shostakovich *Cello Concerto No.1*, Elgar *Enigma Variations*. Sol Gabetta (cello), Philharmonia/Santtu-Matias Rouvali
9.45-10pm **The Essay**
10-11.30pm **Night Tracks**
11.30pm-12.30am **'Round Midnight**

7 FRIDAY

6.30-9.30am **Breakfast**
9.30am-1pm **Essential Classics**
1-4pm **Classical Live**
4-5pm **Composer of the Week** Amanda Maier-Röntgen
5-7pm **In Tune**
7-7.30pm **Classical Mixtape**
CHOICE 7.30-9.45 **Friday Night is Music Night**
9.45-10pm **The Essay**
10-11.30pm **Late Junction**
11.30pm-12.30am **'Round Midnight**

8 SATURDAY

6.30-9am **Saturday Breakfast**
9am-12noon **Saturday Morning**
12-1pm **Earlier...with Jools Holland**
1-2pm **Music Matters** West-Eastern Divan Orchestra
2-4pm **Record Review**
4-5pm **Sound of Cinema**
5-6pm **This Classical Life**
6-9.30pm **Opera on 3**
9.30-10.30pm **Music Planet**

GETTY

10.30pm-12.30am New Music Show

9 SUNDAY

6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1.30pm Private Passions
1.30-3pm Sunday Afternoon
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6pm The Early Music Show
6-7.15pm Words and Music
7.15-8pm Sunday Feature Searching for the Songs of Bukhara
8-10pm Drama on 3
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

10 MONDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-2pm Live from Wigmore Hall
2-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Orlando Gibbons
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert
9.45-10pm The Essay
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

11 TUESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Orlando Gibbons
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Barbican, London. Knussen *Cleveland Pictures*, Britten *Double Concerto*, Vaughan Williams *A Sea Symphony*. Vilde Frang (violin), Lawrence Power (viola), Robin Tritschler (tenor), Tiffin Boys' Choir, BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Sakari Oramo
9.45-10pm The Essay
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

12 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-3pm Classical Live
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Composer of the Week Orlando Gibbons
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert
9.45-10pm The Essay
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

13 THURSDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Orlando Gibbons
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Hoddinott Hall, Cardiff. Dvořák *Cello Concerto*, Jennifer Higdon *Blue Cathedral*, Dawson *Negro Folk Symphony*. Alisa Weilerstein (cello), BBC National Orchestra of Wales/ Ryan Bancroft
9.45-10pm The Essay
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

14 FRIDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Orlando Gibbons
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45 Friday Night is Music Night
9.45-10pm The Essay
10-11.30pm Late Junction
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

15 SATURDAY

6.30-9am Saturday Breakfast
BBC RADIO 3 **CHOICE 9am-12noon Saturday Morning**
12-1pm Earlier...with Jools Holland
1-2pm Music Matters West-Eastern Divan Orchestra
2-4pm Record Review
4-5pm Sound of Cinema
5-6pm This Classical Life Neil Tennant
6-9.30pm Opera on 3
9.30-10.30pm Music Planet
10.30pm-12.30am New Music Show

16 SUNDAY

6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1.30pm Private Passions
1.30-3pm Sunday Afternoon
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6pm The Early Music Show
6-7.15pm Words and Music
7.15-8pm Sunday Feature A Most Queer House
8-10pm Drama on 3 Jubilee
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

17 MONDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-2pm Live from Wigmore Hall
2-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Dvořák
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Snape Maltings. Purcell *Chacony in G minor*, Handel *Organ Concerto Op.7 No.4*, Robin Haigh *LUCK (world premiere)*, Britten *Saint Nicolas*. Katherine Dienes-Williams (organ), Matilda Lloyd (trumpet), Nicholas Pritchard (tenor), Aldeburgh Voices, Britten Sinfonia/Jessica Cottis
9.45-10pm The Essay Michael Longley's Life of Poetry
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

18 TUESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Dvořák
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Snape Maltings. Judith Weir *Fragile*, Schubert *Piano Sonata in A major, D959*, Judith Weir *For Steve*, Schubert *Piano Sonata in B-flat major,*

Tales in Wales: Lionel Bringuier conducts Rimsky-Korsakov in Cardiff

SIMON PAULY

TV CHOICE
Inside Classical

BBC Four's flagship performance series returned to screens in the spring, seeing the BBC orchestras team up with world-class soloists to perform some of the concert hall's biggest showstoppers. The line-up for this series includes Brahms's groundbreaking Symphony No. 4 with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and a gala from the BBC Concert Orchestra at Alexandra Palace, while an unmissable episode comes from the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. In a mythical-themed programme recorded live at Cardiff's Hoddinott Hall, conductor Lionel Bringuier conjures up the charm-filled chaos of Dukas's mischievous broomstick in *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* and transports the audience to the Middle East of yore through the storytelling of Rimsky-Korsakov's sumptuous *Scheherazade*, based on the folk tale collection *One Thousand and One Nights*. And Grieg's much-loved Piano Concerto, in a performance by Chinese-American pianist Zee Zee, is the dazzling cherry on this sumptuous orchestral cake.
BBC iPlayer, available now

D960. Steven Osborne (piano)
9.45-10pm The Essay Michael Longley's Life of Poetry
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

19 WEDNESDAY
6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-3pm Classical Live
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Composer of the Week Dvořák
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert live from Snape Maltings. Judith Weir *Forest*, Britten *Violin Concerto*, Mahler *Symphony No.4*. Daniel Pioro (violin), Elizabeth Watts (soprano), BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Ryan Wigglesworth
9.45-10pm The Essay Michael Longley's Life of Poetry
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

20 THURSDAY
6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Dvořák
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert live from Snape Maltings. Chin *Cello Concerto*, Bruckner *Symphony No.7*. Alban Gerhardt (cello), BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Ryan Wigglesworth
9.45-10pm The Essay Michael Longley's Life of Poetry
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

21 FRIDAY
6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Dvořák
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45 Friday Night is Music Night
9.45-10pm The Essay Michael Longley's Life of Poetry
10-11.30pm Late Junction
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

22 SATURDAY
6.30-9am Saturday Breakfast
9am-12noon Saturday Morning
12-1pm Earlier...with Jools Holland
1-2pm Music Matters West-Eastern Divan Orchestra
2-4pm Record Review
4-5pm Sound of Cinema
5-6pm This Classical Life
6-9.30pm Opera on 3
9.30-10.30pm Music Planet
10.30pm-12.30am New Music Show

23 SUNDAY
6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1.30pm Private Passions
1.30-3pm Sunday Afternoon
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6pm The Early Music Show
6-7.15pm Words and Music
7.15-8pm Between the Ears Bring What You Expect to Find
8-10pm Drama on 3 Kenny Morgan
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

24 MONDAY
6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-2pm Live from Wigmore Hall
2-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Lou Harrison
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Snape Maltings, Suffolk. *Schubert Sonata in A minor, D.821*, Britten *Cello Sonata*, Schumann *Five Pieces in Folk Style*, Debussy *Cello Sonata*. Alban Gerhardt (cello), Steven Osborne (piano)
9.45-10pm The Essay Dig Where You Stand
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

25 TUESDAY
6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Lou Harrison
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Snape Maltings, Suffolk. Haydn *String Quartet in B flat major, Op.76 No.4 'Sunrise'*, Messiaen *Cinq Rechants*, Judith Weir *Blue hills beyond blue hills*. Castalian Quartet
9.45-10pm The Essay Dig Where You Stand
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

26 WEDNESDAY
6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-3pm Classical Live
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Composer of the Week Lou Harrison
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Snape Maltings. Felix Mendelssohn *Cello Sonata No.1*, Brahms *Piano Trio No.2*, Schubert *Piano Quintet in A major, D.667 'Trout'*. Braimah Kanneh-Mason (violin), Edgar Francis (viola), Sheku Kanneh-Mason (cello), Isata Kanneh-Mason (piano), Toby Hughes (double-bass).
9.45-10pm The Essay Dig Where You Stand
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

27 THURSDAY
6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Vivaldi
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Bridgewater Hall. Bridge *Enter Spring*, Shostakovich *Symphony No.3 'May Day'*, Stravinsky *The Rite of Spring*. Hallé Choir, BBC Philharmonic/John Storgårds
9.45-10pm The Essay Dig Where You Stand
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

28 FRIDAY
6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Lou Harrison
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45 Friday Night is Music Night
9.45-10pm The Essay Dig Where You Stand
10-11.30pm Late Junction
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

29 SATURDAY
6.30-9am Saturday Breakfast
9am-12noon Saturday Morning
12-1pm Earlier... with Jools Holland
1-2pm Music Matters Music on the Front Line
2-4pm Record Review
4-5pm Sound of Cinema
5-6pm This Classical Life Seckou Keita
6-9.30pm Opera on 3
9.30-10.30pm Music Planet
10.30pm-12.30am New Music Show

30 SUNDAY
6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1.30pm Private Passions
1.30-3pm Sunday Afternoon
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6pm The Early Music Show
6-7.15pm Words and Music
7.15-8pm Between the Ears – Imogen in the Amazon
8-10pm Drama on 3
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

QUIZ ANSWERS from p 104
1. Robert Schumann
2. Johannes Brahms
3. a) Jean Sibelius; b) Edvard Grieg; c) Edward Elgar
4. Thomas Tallis
5. *L'heure espagnole*
6. Judith Weir
7. Symphony No. 5
8. Nimrod (in Elgar's *Enigma Variations*: the numbers and initials are the titles of each movement, the initials being those of friends depicted)
9. Nino Rota: *The Godfather* and *The Godfather Part II*
10. The Statue of Liberty

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THE QUIZ

Keep the cogs whirring with our ten melodious questions...

1. Completed in 1841, whose Symphony No. 1 is often known as the 'Spring Symphony'?

2. Whose Third Symphony begins with the motif 'F – A flat – F', standing for 'Frei aber froh' (Free but happy)?

3. Which composers lived in the following houses: a) Ainola (1904-57); b) Troldhaugen (1885-1907; above); c) Brinkwells (1917-20)?

4. Whose Christmas mass *Puer Natus Est* may well have been written to celebrate the marriage of Mary I of England to Philip II of Spain in 1554?

5. The ticking of three metronomes is heard at the beginning of which 1911 opera by Ravel?

6. Whose opera *Blond Eckbert* was first performed at English National Opera on 20 April 1994?

7. Widor's Toccata is the final movement of which of his organ symphonies?

8. If I = C.A.E, V = R.P.A. and XI = G.R.S., then IX = what?

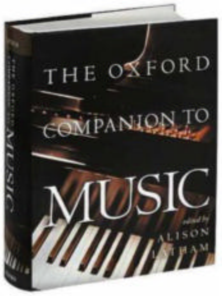
9. Who, in 1975, won the Academy Award for Best Original Dramatic Score, having had his Oscar nomination two years earlier revoked for re-using material? And what were the two films?

10. Irving Berlin's 1949 song 'Give me your tired, your poor' set words from a sonnet by Emma Lazarus that is inscribed on which globally famous landmark?

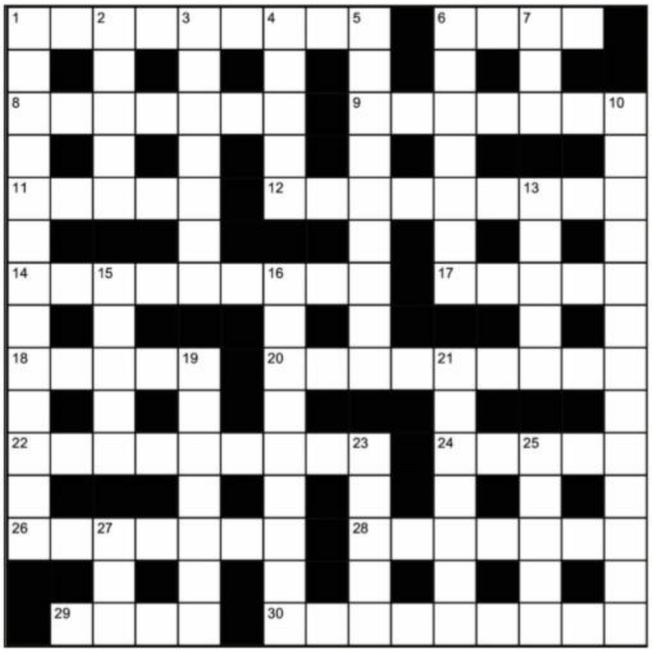
See p102 for answers

The *BBC Music Magazine* PRIZE CROSSWORD NO. 399

Crossword set by **Paul Henderson**



The first correct solution of our crossword picked at random will win a copy of **The Oxford Companion to Music.** A runner-up will win **Who Knew? Answers to Questions about Classical Music** (see oup.co.uk). Send answers to: *BBC Music Magazine*, Crossword 399/June 2024, PO Box 501, Leicester, LE94 0AA to arrive by 11 June 2024 (solution in Sep 2024 issue).



Your name & address ....

....

....

....

....

ACROSS

1 Ireland overture, potentially arty and sonic (9)
6/29 Regularly like lad in mist producing sea shanty? (4,4)
8 Mountain plants depicted in first half of Strauss work? (7)
9 Sound of complaint about idiot in Christmas song (7)
11/18 Expert in 6/29 – relics chap revived (5,5)
12 French is adopted by second-placed bandleader (9)
14 Song about drink possibly offering bit of fresh water too (3,3,3)
17 Keynote, note mostly rebounding I caught (5)
18 See 11 across
20 *The Ring*, for instance, exciting e.g. arty lot (9)
22 Two collaring Greek character with information linked to a Gluck heroine (9)
24 Bags of passion, initially, after live form of jazz (5)
26 Company backed operatic song involving new wind instrument (7)
28 Bass taking a rôle in *Fidelio*, extravagant in Italian style (7)
29 See 6 across
30 Composer, backing half of mezzos, trimmed line – heavens! (9)

DOWN

1 I miss toccatas being played with very detached notes (13)
2 Theme to choose (not Mozart work) (5)
3 Playing a Lord in Handel opera (7)
4 Long-running musical bringing in second sets of actors (5)
5 Article from Albéniz included in recent blog comment and column (5,4)
6 Allegro in the extreme from fellow with a special exam (7)
7 Principal violin half-seen in meadow (3)
10 Libretto set up my simulated work by 30 (13)
13 Beat and energy in dance (5)
15 A disgusted comment about soprano? Shame (5)
16 Attention wavering, I ignored variable Liszt piece (9)
19 Holding tuning-pin – string's ending in G (7)
21 Warning about book, one identifying Italian composer (7)
23 Recording: almost entirely useless (5)
25 Collection of composers – bloke and children he sired, primarily! (5)
27 A note in sol-fa provides difficulty (3)

MARCH SOLUTION
No. 396

MARCH WINNER
Mike Smith, London

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GETTY

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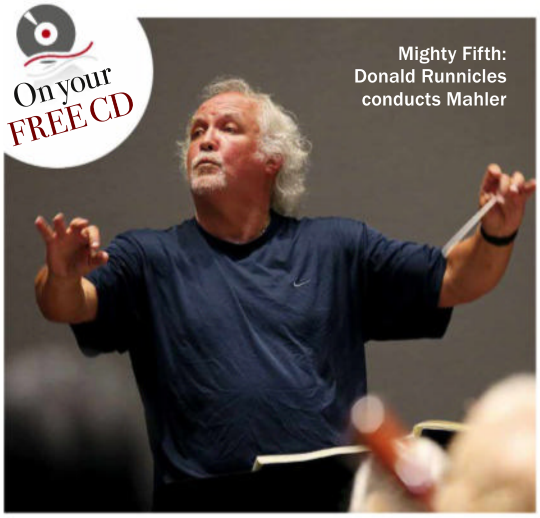
Let the Proms begin!

We welcome the world's greatest classical music festival with full concert details, plus our highlights of the wonderful season that lies ahead



Mighty Fifth: Donald Runnicles conducts Mahler

Mahler *Symphony No. 5*

Performed live at the BBC Proms by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under conductor Sir Donald Runnicles

PLUS! BBC Symphony Orchestra chief conductor ***Sakari Oramo*** tells us about his love of the Proms; we look at famous musical moments at the ***Olympic Games***; *Leon Bosch* celebrates ***South Africa***'s classical music scene; the mysteries of Gregorian chant explored; and ***Elizabeth Maconchy*** is our *Composer of the Month*

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abc Jan-Dec 2020 – 25,734

Music that changed me

Dani Howard

Composer

Dani Howard is a British composer with an impressive list of commissions from ensembles including the London Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the BBC orchestras. Her debut album of orchestral works, containing her RPS Award-winning Trombone Concerto, is out on Rubicon, and she has recently been appointed artist-in-residence with the National Youth Orchestra

When I was young, I wanted to hit things! At five I demanded to learn the drums at school and eventually, after a year of lessons, my parents bought me a drum kit which, considering we lived in an apartment in Hong Kong, was good of them. I loved playing drums and making up songs, but my mother thought it would be a good idea for me and my siblings to learn the piano. I had a wonderful teacher, Anne Grady, but I couldn't get excited about the piano.

The cello, on the other hand – once I started learning with Richard Bamping, the principal cello in the Hong Kong Philharmonic, it changed my life. In the eight years I studied with him, he opened my mind to classical music. I was 15 or 16 when he played me BRITTEN's Cello Suite No. 1, which opens with all those double stops, and something opened up in my mind and my ears. That contemporary soundworld felt fresh and exciting. I studied BRAHMS's Cello Sonata in E minor and I remember spending three hours with Richard on the first two bars. By the end I could play all the notes, but he said, 'You know, you won't be able to play this piece until you're in love.' I think he was right, and the experience of working on the piece with him taught me so much about depth.

When I heard the Hong Kong Philharmonic play JOHN ADAMS's *Harmonielehre*, it hit me like a ton of bricks. It felt like something was coming together, between my love of pop music, with its rhythmic drive, and classical music. As well as the cello, I played the drums, guitar and keyboards in various bands, including one with my sisters called C-Thru! I loved writing songs and original music for other people to play. I didn't realise you could actually study composing, but once I found out, I applied to conservatoires in the UK at 16, and started at the Royal College of Music in London, aged 17. In my first year we looked at a movement of TAVENER's *The Protecting Veil* and I was so entranced that I downloaded it immediately. I remember leaving the RCM, sitting in Hyde Park and listening to the whole 40 minutes, and I had to process it for another three hours.

I do feel like a British composer, but I love the freshness of American music. My favourite living composer is Mason Bates, who has written a 21st-century Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra called *Philharmonia Fantastique*, which has been turned into an animated film by the Pixar team. I also love Nico Muhly's work. It can be so hard to create an identity as a composer, but these two composers have such distinct styles they are immediately recognisable.

I watched my cello teacher perform STRAUSS's *Don Quixote* with the Hong Kong Phil and that was the piece that got me really engaged with orchestral writing. I wanted to see the score and find out how Strauss was creating that sound – he has inspired me by showing the possibilities of the orchestral palette. It's hard as a composer to spend so much time working on an orchestral piece and not knowing if it will be heard more than once, so I'm happy my Trombone Concerto has been played by Peter Moore with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, and recorded on my debut CD, with other performances by the LSO and a US premiere.

I've just started a residency with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and it's a blast to be engaging with their projects – not just for the musicians in the orchestra but also the work they are doing in schools and communities. One of the highlights will be writing a huge piece for 300 musicians to play at the BBC Proms – 160 on stage and the others positioned around the Royal Albert Hall!

Interview by Amanda Holloway

ROCCO REDONDO

The choices

Britten Cello Suite No. 1
Mstislav Rostropovich (cello) *Decca 4218592*

Brahms Cello Sonata in E minor, Op. 38
Mischa Maisky (cello), Pavel Gililov (piano) *DG E4596772*

John Adams Harmonielehre
San Francisco Symphony/Edo de Waart *Nonesuch 0349799977*

Tavener The Protecting Veil
Steven Isserlis (cello); LSO/Gennady Rozhdestvensky *Erato 3632932*

R Strauss Don Quixote
Janos Starker (cello); Bavarian RSO/Leonard Slatkin *BMG Classics 09026-60561-2*

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